

My FAVOURITE Story

by

ENID BLYTON · ANGELA BRAZIL · E.M.BRENT-DYER

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WINIFRED NORLING

EVADNE PRICE

MAY WYNNE

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ETC.



MY FAVOURITE STORY

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CONQUERORS OF THE AIR

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(In course of preparation)

THE YOUNG MAGICIAN

TREASURE ISLAND

ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MERRY MEN

ROBINSON CRUSOE

My Favourite Story

SELECTED STORIES FOR GIRLS

by

Enid Blyton
Angela Brazil
E. M. Brent-Dyer
Phyllis Briggs
Douglas V. Duff
Mary Gervaise
Bertha Leonard
Winifred Norling
Evadne Price
May Wynne

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CONTENTS

<i>The Story</i>	<i>The Storyteller</i>	
FATHER TIME AND HIS PATTERN BOOK	Enid Blyton . . .	7
THE SURPRISING DAY	Angela Brazil . . .	12
RESCUE IN THE SNOWS	Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer .	17
DOG OF MY DREAMS	Phyllis Briggs . . .	26
ROSALIND TO THE RESCUE	Douglas V. Duff . . .	32
PERILOUS PASS	Mary Gervaise . . .	49
CRUISE OF THE "CAKEWALK"	Olive L. Groom . . .	56
CARAVAN TO THE CAPE	Bertha Leonard . . .	64
DANGER TIDE	F. W. Ludlam . . .	80
FLOOD IN THE FENS	Winifred Norling . . .	89
THE LION THAT LIKED PEPPERMINTS	Evadne Price . . .	97
THE ELEPHANTS' RIGHT OF WAY	V. F. Wells . . .	109
THE ROSE PATROL	May Wynne . . .	115

List of Colour Plates

ON THE WINDOW-PANE MISS MITCHELL SAW HER OWN PORTRAIT	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"DARLING!" WHISPERED BABS	<i>Facing page</i> 17
ROSALIND RODE OUT AT THE HEAD OF THE DISGUISED PATROL	32
MARGOT CLUNG ON, DETERMINED NOT TO SHOW HER DEEP FEAR	49
STEALTHILY, THEY LED THE HORSE AWAY FROM THE GIPSY-CAMP	64
"STOP! STOP!" FREDA SHOUTED	80
THE LION KEPT BEGGING FOR ANOTHER SWEET	97
A WRATHFUL VOICE HAILED THE TRESPASSERS	115



FATHER TIME AND HIS PATTERN BOOK

by

Enid Blyton

One New Year's Eve, in the middle of the night, Robin woke up with a jump. He sat up in bed and listened. Whatever could have awakened him?

Then he heard slow footsteps outside his window, and he wondered who could be wandering round the garden in the middle of the night!

"Perhaps it is someone lost in the snow," he thought.

So he jumped out of bed and went to the window. He opened it and leaned out. It was dark outside, but he could just make out something moving below.

"Who's there?" he called. And a most surprising answer came up to him:

"I'm Old Father Time! I've come to collect this year's patterns."

"This year's patterns! Whatever do you mean?" said Robin in astonish-

ment. "And what are you doing in our garden?"

"Well, I came to collect your pattern too," said the old man.

"I haven't got a pattern!" said Robin. "You must be dreaming."

"Maybe I am," said Father Time. "But my dreams are true ones. It's cold out here, little boy. Let me in and I will show you some of my patterns."

"I think there's a fire in the dining-room, if it hasn't quite gone out," said Robin, excited. "I'll let you in at the front door, and we can go into the dining-room for a bit. Shall I wake Mother?"

"Oh, no," said Father Time. "Don't wake anyone. Hurry up and let me in."

Robin slipped downstairs. He opened the front door quietly and someone

came in. Robin went to the dining-room and switched on the light. Then he saw his visitor for the first time.

Father Time was an old, old man. His beard almost reached the ground. He had a wise and kindly face, with dreamy, happy eyes and a sad mouth. He carried a great scythe with him, which Robin was most surprised to see.

"What's that for?" he asked. "Did you get it out of our gardener's shed? It's what we use to cut the long grass."

"This scythe is mine," said Father Time. "I use it to cut away the years from one another. I cut time with it."

"How queer!" said Robin, feeling excited. "Now, do show me the patterns you spoke about! Where are they? And what are they?"

Father Time didn't have any book of patterns. Robin had thought he would have one rather like the book of patterns that Mother sometimes got from the man who sold them their curtains. But except for his scythe he had nothing at all.

"My patterns?" he said. "Oh, I have them all, though you can't see them just at the moment. Every one makes a pattern of his life, you know. Your brother does. Your friends do. You do. I'll show you any pattern you like to ask me for."

"Well—I'd like to see what pattern my brother made last year," said Robin.

Father Time put down his scythe carefully. He put out the light. Then he held up his hands in the darkness and from the fingers of old Father Time there flowed a shining ribbon, broad and quivering as if it were alive. It was as wide as the table, and it flowed down on to it like a cloth, spreading itself flat for Robin to see.

"I say! It's a lovely pattern," said Robin. "I shouldn't have thought my little brother could have made such a beauty. How did he make it?"

"The pattern is made of the stuff he put into each day," said Father Time. "The happy moments—the times he ran to do a kindness—the times he cried with fear or pain. They are all in the pattern. This line of silver is a line of love—he loves very much—for it is a beautiful line. This glowing thread shows his happy times—he is a happy little boy. This shimmering piece is a great kindness he did, about the middle of the year. It shines because it still shines in every one's memory."

"Yes—I remember that," said Robin. "I couldn't go to a party. So Lennie wouldn't go either, and he brought me every single one of his toys and gave me them for my own, because he was so sorry for me—even his best railway train that he loves. I shall never forget how kind he was to me. But what is this ugly little line of black dots that keeps showing in the pattern?"

"Those spots come into a pattern when the maker of the pattern loses his temper," said Father Time. "He must be careful, or as the years go on the spots will get bigger and bigger and spoil his pattern altogether."

"Oh, dear—I'll have to warn him," said Robin. "Now show me Harry's pattern, Father Time. You know—Harry Jones. He lives next door. Have you got his for last year?"

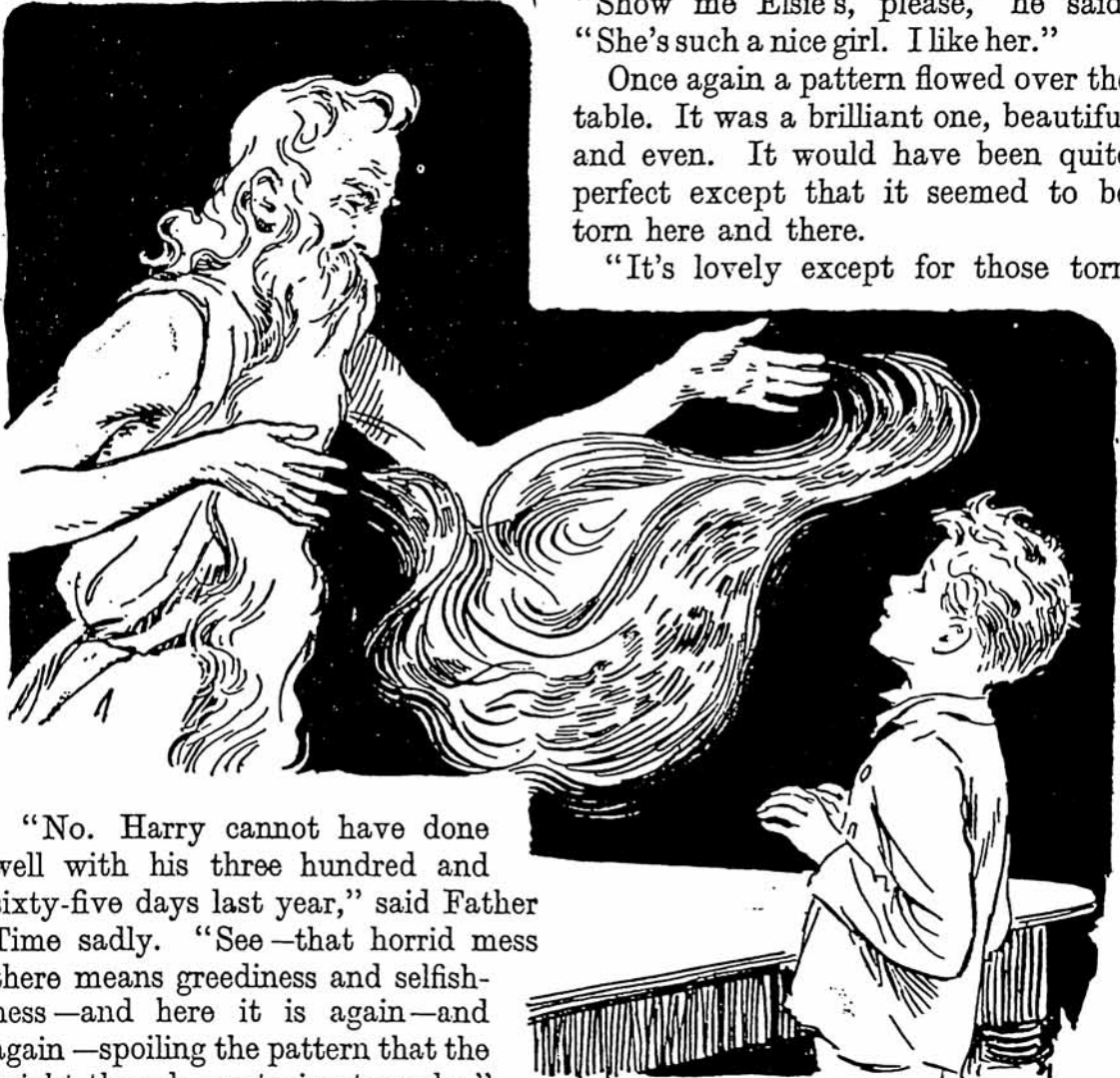
"Yes, I collected it tonight," said Father Time.

The pattern he had been showing Robin faded away into the darkness, and from Father Time's fingers flowed

another one that spread itself on the table as the other had done.

It was an ugly pattern, with two or three bright threads lighting it up. Robin looked at it.

"It's not a very beautiful pattern, is it?" he asked.



"No. Harry cannot have done well with his three hundred and sixty-five days last year," said Father Time sadly. "See—that horrid mess there means greediness and selfishness—and here it is again—and again—spoiling the pattern that the bright threads are trying to make."

"Yes—Harry is selfish," said Robin. "He's an only child, and thinks everything must be for him. What are the bright threads, Father Time?"

Father Time looked at them closely. "They are fine, strong bits of pattern," he said. "They are the hard work that Harry has done. He is a good

worker, and if he goes on trying hard those bright threads will be so strong that they will run right through those messy bits. Maybe one day he will make a better pattern."

The pattern faded. Robin thought for a moment, and then he asked for another. "Show me Elsie's, please," he said. "She's such a nice girl. I like her."

Once again a pattern flowed over the table. It was a brilliant one, beautiful and even. It would have been quite perfect except that it seemed to be torn here and there.

"It's lovely except for those torn

From his fingers flowed a shining ribbon

bits," said Robin.

"Yes—Elsie must be a happy and clever girl," said Father Time. "But, alas—look at these places where the pattern is quite spoilt! That means cruelty, Robin—a thing that tears the pattern of our lives to bits. Poor

Elsie! She must be careful, or one day her pattern will be torn to pieces, and all her happiness will go."

"How strange, Father Time!" said Robin, astonished. "That's the one thing I can't bear about Elsie—she is so unkind to animals. I've often seen her throw stones at them. And yet she's so nice in every other way."

"Tell her about her pattern," said Father Time, "or maybe one day a moment of cruelty will spoil a whole year or more."

"Now show me Leslie's pattern," said Robin. "He's such a funny little boy, Father Time—so shy and timid, like a mouse! I'd love to see the kind of pattern that he has made this last year."

Once again a pattern flowed in the darkness—but what a queer one! It could hardly be seen. There was no brightness in it, no real pattern to see. It was just a smudge of dingy colours.

"Poor little boy!" said Father Time. "He is afraid of everything! He has put no brightness into his pattern, no happy moments, no kindness—only shyness and fear. Robin, you must help him to make a better pattern next year. Tell him to have courage and not to be afraid of doing kindness to anyone—then his pattern will glow and shine."

The pattern faded. Father Time went to switch on the light. "I must go," he said. "I have many other patterns to collect tonight, and to put into my book of history."

"Wait a minute!" said Robin. "Please, Father Time, may I see my own pattern?"



Robin looked at it, half fearful, half excited

"Yes, you may," said Father Time. He didn't put on the light, but held up his strange fingers once again. And from them flowed the pattern of all the days of the last year—the pattern made by Robin himself.

Robin looked at it, half fearful, half excited, wondering what he would see. He saw a brilliant pattern, full of bright colours that danced and shone. In it were pools of silver light, but here and there were smudges of grey that spoiled the lovely pattern he had made.

"Ah, Robin, you have done well this year to make such a fine pattern," said Father Time, pleased. "You have been happy, for see how the pattern glows. You have worked hard, for see how strong the pattern is, unbroken and steady. You have been kind, for here are the silver pools that shine in the pattern and shine in your friends' memories, too."

"But, Father Time—what are those grey smudges that spoil the pattern here and there?" asked Robin, puzzled. "I don't like them."

"Neither do I," said Father Time. "They show where you spoil your days by telling untruths, Robin. Truth always shines out in a pattern, but untruths smudge it with grey. See—you did not tell the truth there—and there—and there—and look, as the pattern reaches the end of the year,

the grey smudges get worse. You have let that bad habit grow on you and spoil the lovely pattern you were making."

"Yes," said Robin, ashamed. "I have been getting worse about telling untruths, I know. Mother keeps telling me that. I didn't know that they would spoil the pattern of my year, though. I'll be very, very careful next year—I shan't tell a single untruth, then my pattern will be really lovely."

"Be careful nothing else creeps in to spoil it," said Father Time. "I will come next year and show you the pattern you have made. Now good-bye—I must go. I feel much warmer and I have enjoyed our talk!"

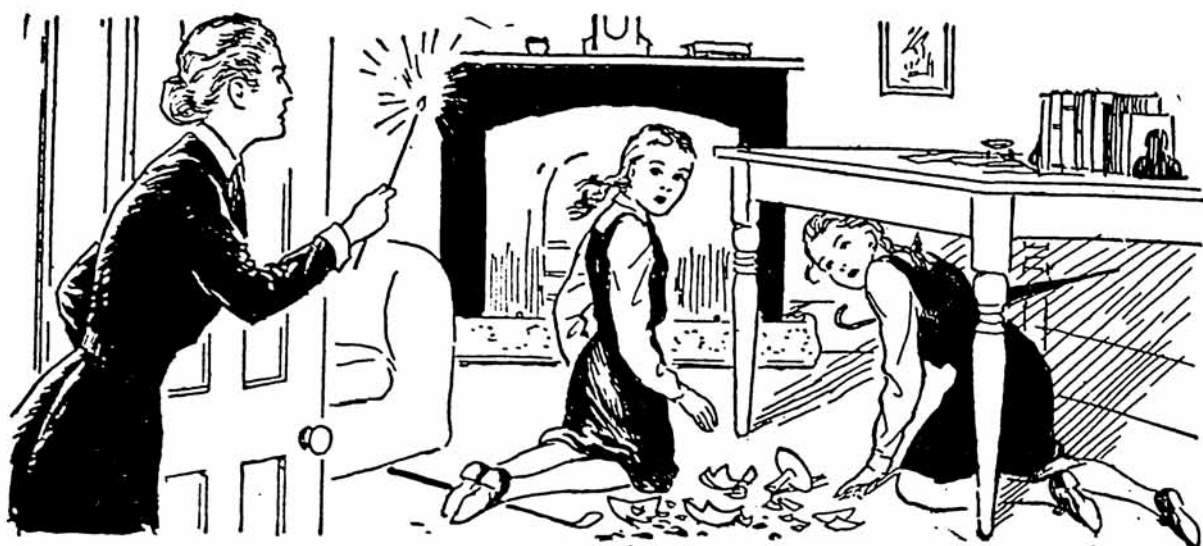
"So have I! It was wonderful," said Robin. "Thank you very much, Father Time!"

The old man slipped out of the house and Robin went back to bed. He dreamed all night long of the year's patterns, and when he awoke in the morning he couldn't think whether it had *all* been a dream or not.

"Anyway, I shall know next New Year's Eve," said Robin. "I shall look out for the old man again then—and see the pattern I have made! I do hope it's beautiful."

Would you like to see the one you made last year? What do you think it would be like? *I would love to know!*





THE SURPRISING DAY by Angela Brazil

"Gwen! Gwen, don't you hear? Do stop reading! I'm sure you must know that book off by heart. I've finished my woolwork, and I've used up all the nicest colours in my paint-box, and I've broken my chalks and lost my pencil. I can't think what to do next, and it's all horrid. I *wish* we hadn't to stay here for Christmas!"

Gracie's little rosy full-moon face presented at that moment such a spectacle of woe, and her voice had assumed a tone of such aggravated affliction, that Gwen, who for the last five minutes had been conveniently deaf, could no longer resist the pitiful appeal, and putting down her book joined her sister at the window.

The glass was covered with steam, and Gracie for lack of other occupation had been amusing herself by writing her name in large straggling capital letters, adding fancy portraits underneath on the principle of a circle for a head, two dots for eyes, and two straight lines to represent nose and mouth.

Gwen rubbed a peep-hole with the edge of her cuff and looked out, then looked back into the room and heaved a gusty sigh. Neither prospect was calculated to raise the spirits of even the most cheerfully disposed person. A thick white fog hung heavily over the garden, revealing only a few gaunt branches of the trees, and completely hiding the road, where the sight of a passing motor, or any kind of vehicle if no grander than a milk cart, would have been more interesting than nothing at all. Inside, the scene was equally unattractive: a bare classroom full of rows of forms and desks, the walls hung with maps, and the fire guarded with a high fender. It was the absolute reverse of pretty or cosy, and as Gwen's eyes travelled disconsolately from the geological chart to the plain-boarded floor she gave a groan of utter misery.

"It's *too* bad that Father and Mother had to start off to France just before breaking-up day, so that we couldn't go home!" said Gracie plaintively.

"We'd been counting the very hours till the end of the term, and Miss Ashton had packed our boxes. Then that hateful telegram came, and Miss Mitchell said we were to stay here."

"I wonder whether we shall have our presents tomorrow?" replied Gwen. "I don't suppose Father and Mother had time to send them to us. Christmas simply won't be Christmas if we can't hang up our stockings for Santa Claus."

"I expect we shan't even have a proper Christmas dinner!" wailed Gracie. "I asked Lizzie if there would be turkey and plum pudding, but she only said 'Wait and see!' There won't be any dessert and crackers, I'm sure. Oh! Isn't it simply wretched?"

In the whole town of Middlestone it would have been difficult on that particular Christmas Eve to find two more forlorn children than Gwen and Gracie Lonsdale, whose hard fate it was to be obliged to pass the holidays at school. They had looked on with wistful faces while the other girls, a jolly laughing crew, had started off in cars to the station, and had walked back into the classrooms with a feeling of desolation at their emptiness. The house seemed so large and hollow now it was destitute of its usual young life, and so strangely quiet that every noise echoed in a way never noticed on ordinary occasions. Though it was a relief to have no lessons to learn it was very hard to find any occupations with which to amuse themselves. The three days that had elapsed since the breaking-up had seemed interminable. They were taken a few prim walks by Miss Mitchell, their school mistress, and the rest of the time they were left to their own devices, with special injunctions

that they were to behave themselves just as if it were the term and not holidays, and that they were on no account to get into mischief.

By Christmas Eve, when the fog had deprived them of the coveted peep at the shops which Miss Mitchell had promised, the two girls felt as if their trials had reached a pitch almost beyond the limits of their endurance.

"I thought we might have put some cards in our scrap-books," said Gwen dolefully. "I asked Miss Mitchell if we could have some paste, but she said the servants were too busy to make any. She wouldn't let us cut out pictures, either, for fear we should drop snippings over the floor."

Gracie stamped her foot.

"Nasty, hateful thing!" she cried passionately. "She always stops us when we want to do anything nice. I think she's the ugliest person I know!"

"So do I," said Gwen. "When she's cross her nose turns up and her mouth turns down, just like this," and with her forefinger she drew a side face on the window-pane representing the features of her teacher in a somewhat exaggerated style.

"Oh! It is like her!" exclaimed Gracie. "Exactly like. Put in her ear, and the little bob of hair at the back of her head. That's it!"

Gwen looked at her sketch with a critical eye, added a line or two, and then wrote over it: "This is Miss Mitchell."

"We'll show it to Lizzie when she comes to light the gas," said Gracie. "I'm sure she'll laugh. She can't bear Miss Mitchell. Here she is now. I hear her walking upstairs. Oh, Lizzie! Look what we've drawn on the window! Isn't it just——?"

But here Gracie stopped in a hurry, for the opening door revealed not the expected plump face of the sympathetic housemaid, but the unsmiling visage of Miss Mitchell herself. At Gracie's words she naturally glanced immediately at the window. There was her own portrait, a most unflattering likeness, and, to avoid any possibility of mistake, her name printed in rather shaky letters above. She walked across the room and wiped out the work of art with a corner of her pocket handkerchief, then turned to the conscience-stricken pair.

"I was bringing you a few chocolates," she remarked grimly, "but as I consider you don't deserve them I shall take them away again. If you can find no better occupation than drawing on the panes I shall have to set you some lessons to learn."

"I never expected it would be Miss Mitchell!" exclaimed Gracie, when the offended teacher, in high dudgeon, had taken her departure. "She's dreadfully angry!"

"I don't care!" burst out Gwen defiantly. "She scolds us for everything. It doesn't seem to matter whether we're good or not. Let us be really naughty for once and give her something to be cross about!"

"What shall we do?" asked Gracie, her round blue eyes dancing with anticipation, and quite ready for any mischief which her elder sister might suggest. "Shall we climb on the bookcase again, or open the window and lean out?"

"No, it must be much nicer than that—something that would be more fun."

"Shall we carve our names on the desks?"

"I wish you'd be quiet and let me think for a minute! I know now. Do you remember that story we read about the two boys who were taken prisoners and shut up in the baron's castle?"

"Of course I do; and how they escaped."

"Well, let us pretend we're Tristram and Hildebrand, and that Miss Mitchell is Oliver, the horrid gaoler who kept the key, and Lizzie is Fritz, the faithful retainer who helped them. We'll go ever so quietly downstairs, and try and speak to Lizzie in the kitchen without Miss Mitchell catching us, and, if we can manage to get out by the dressing-room door, we'll run all round the garden in the fog."

"Oh, yes!" agreed Gracie. "That's a lovely idea. You shall be Tristram, and I'll be Hildebrand. Miss Mitchell will make a splendid Oliver; she's quite nasty enough."

"We must pretend it's the evening when the gaoler forgot to turn the lock properly," said Gwen, "and they went by the winding stair to the gallery, and found their way to the guard-room, where Fritz was disguised as a pedlar. We'd better go now before Lizzie lights the gas. It will be much jollier in the dark."

Full of the imaginary parts they were acting, the two girls opened the door noiselessly and peeped outside. They were not supposed to stir from the classroom until tea-time and were certainly not allowed to enter the kitchen, both of which facts added a spice of reality to the adventure. There was nobody on the dim landing, but they could hear Lizzie's voice singing somewhere in the regions below. Very softly they crept, hand-in-hand, down

the stairs, pausing every now and then to listen, or to peep through the banisters, in case they caught a glimpse of the enemy.

"The baron is out hunting," whispered Gwen. "We shall have time to escape before he returns to feast in the banqueting hall."

"I should know Fritz through any disguise," replied Gracie, entering into the spirit of the undertaking, "but if Oliver discovers us we are undone."

"We must walk warily," said Gwen, treading on tiptoe down the passage.

"Fritz sang the ancient air of the House of Rothenburg for a signal," said Gracie, as Lizzie's voice was once more uplifted in the kitchen.

"The time then is ripe."

"Courage! Let us brave all!"

"I must needs catch up this rapier," said Gwen, seizing an umbrella from the hat-stand; "it may perchance serve to defend us against the foe."

"We will sell our lives dearly," hissed Gracie in a bloodcurdling tone, as she helped herself to one of Miss Mitchell's golf-clubs.

The pair advanced cautiously along the hall, much enjoying the thrilling

feeling of secrecy; it all seemed so real that it was quite easy to imagine a winding stair behind them, and an oaken portal in front, or to construe the clinking of crockery into the clash of steel.

"Now or never!" said Gwen, brandishing her umbrella.

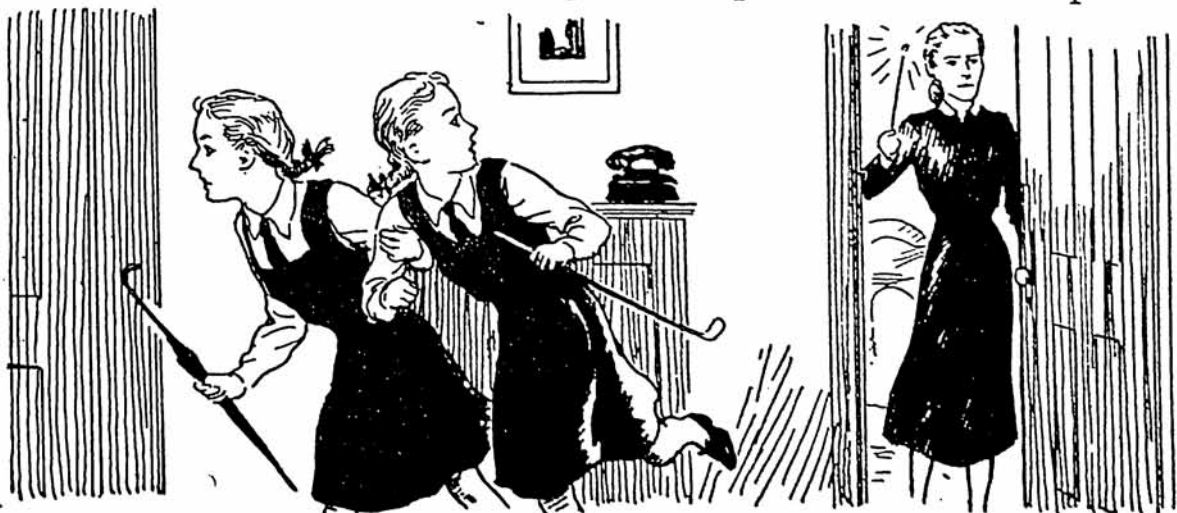
"Slay Oliver, should he oppose us, and if the baron——"

At that moment, however, a door suddenly opened, and a flood of light from the dining-room threw into relief the austere figure of Miss Mitchell, who, with a taper in her hand, was apparently going to seek something in the drawing-room.

Without a second's hesitation Gwen seized Gracie by the arm, and pulled her into the study, escaping the enemy by such a hair's-breadth that as she passed them the mistress's dress actually brushed against Gracie's sleeve.

"He goes to secure the dungeons. We will outwit him yet," whispered the would-be Tristram.

Unfortunately Miss Mitchell, instead of turning into the drawing-room as the children had expected, lighted the hall lamp and retraced her steps with



Gwen seized Gracie's arm, and they ran for the study

the evident intention of doing the same service by the gas in the study.

"We shall be caught! Let us hide somewhere. Quick!" gasped Gracie.

"Here, under the table!" replied Gwen, groping her way recklessly across the room, with her arm round Gracie's shoulder, for Miss Mitchell was already at the door.

In their hurry they quite forgot the weapons they were carrying. Gracie tripped in the dark over the golf-club, and, to save herself, clutched wildly at the edge of the table, grasping something which descended with a crash upon the floor. The next few minutes were an ordeal from which Gwen and Gracie would have given much to escape. Miss Mitchell lighted the gas, then stood with the taper still in her hand gazing in dumb horror upon the shivered fragments of a Venetian glass goblet that lay smashed to atoms on the carpet. Her two frightened pupils looked at each other in dismay while Lizzie, the housemaid, who had run in on hearing the smash, alternately bewailed the accident and tried to make excuses for the culprits.

"Dear, dear! This is most deplorable!" ejaculated the mistress at last. "My beautiful Venetian vase, which had just been sent me as a Christmas present, simply broken to bits! What are you two doing in my study?" she added sharply.

The two girls were so utterly overwhelmed by the disaster that they did not dare to offer either explanation or apology. What would happen next they could not imagine. Perhaps Miss Mitchell would say they did not deserve a Christmas dinner! At this crisis, however, a sudden peal was heard at the front door bell. Lizzie

hurried to answer it, and was about to return and announce that a gentleman visitor had arrived when Gracie and Gwen caught the sound of a familiar voice, and, dashing in a mad stampede down the hall, flung themselves ecstatically into their father's arms.

"We couldn't spend Christmas without you, my darlings!" exclaimed Mr. Lonsdale; "so we contrived to finish our business in Paris, and rush back to England again just in time. Are your things packed? Perhaps a few necessities can be put in a bag, and your boxes could be sent afterwards. We must catch the five o'clock express. Never mind about tea; we can get some on the train. Mother is waiting—oh, so impatiently!—for you at home!"

What a surprising joy it was! And no Christmas Day was ever so delightful as the one that followed. Santa Claus did his utmost, and filled the stockings nearly to bursting point, while the turkey, the blazing pudding, the desert and the crackers were even above the ordinary standard of Yuletide fare. Gwen and Gracie spent part of the afternoon each writing, with Mother's help, a letter of apology to Miss Mitchell, and Father promised, on the very first occasion that the shops were open again, to go to London on purpose to buy a Venetian goblet exactly similar to the one that was broken.

"It shall be sent off by train," he declared, "and I hope your mistress will accept it in place of the other vase. You young scamps! I expect she must be as glad to get rid of you as Mother and I are to see you again. School is all very well in term time, but I don't think either teachers or pupils are particularly anxious to have each other's company on Christmas Eve!"



"DARLING!" WHISPERED BABS
(From "Dog of my Dreams," page 25)



RESCUE IN THE SNOWS

by

Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer

The back door banged noisily, and Mrs. Evans, who had been watching the road anxiously for the past half-hour, left the living-room.

"Hello, Mummy!" rang out a cheery voice. "Here we are at last!" There came the sounds of someone struggling out of heavy outdoor garments.

"Gwen Evans!" Mrs. Evans sounded stern. "Where have you been all this time? An hour and more by the clock it is since you should have been home. What have you been doing?"

"Don't be cross," said the cheery voice coaxingly. "I went with Cerenwen to wait for the Gwylt Dwlus bus, but it never came. And then Tom Owen came past, and he said that all the buses had been taken off the roads because the snow is so bad. So I brought her home for the night. She

can ring Auntie, so she won't worry."

Mrs. Evans was in the scullery by this time to welcome her girl and her niece. An unwilling smile was on her lips as she looked at slender, black-haired Gwen, and taller, but not so much broader Cerenwen, her niece.

"Really worried, I was getting," she said. "The storm is so heavy, and when I rang up the school they said you had left early."

Gwen pulled on her slippers, got up from her lowly seat on a three-legged stool, and came to hug her mother. "Honestly, Mummy, we were only waiting. When we heard the buses were off, I made Cerenwen come back with me, and we took the short cut across the fields to be quicker. But no more for little Gwennie when it's snowing a blizzard! I thought we'd end up in a ditch for the night!"

"You should have kept to the road in such a storm. Cerenwen, my dear, I'm thankful Gwen brought you back. Hurry, now, and ring up your mother, or she will be even more worried than I was—especially if she knows the buses are off the road."

Cerenwen, a year older than Gwen, laughed as she came to kiss her aunt. "It's a lot of nonsense. It's only four miles, and I've walked it dozens of times. But Gwen got into such a state when I suggested it that I agreed to come for the night just to calm her down."

"Gwen was right, my dear. But you go and ring up your mother and tell her you'll stay here for the night. If the snow is still heavy tomorrow, you'd best spend the weekend, and go home after school on Monday. Tell her so."

"Oh, it'll be fine by the morning," said Cerenwen, as she went to the telephone. "It's much too fierce to last for long."

"Tea ready?" asked Gwen, as she followed her mother into the kitchen. "I'll carry it in, shall I? Where are Dad and Ivor?"

"Gone up the valley to see about those ewes," said her mother, opening the oven-door, and lifting out a great dish of Welsh-cakes. "Lucky I made these. Cerenwen is so fond of them."

"Does Dad expect any lambs tonight?" asked Gwen, picking up the big teapot. "It'll be a cold job, sitting up."

"You never can tell in weather like this," replied Mrs. Evans. "Dear knows we've had snow enough already; but this is the worst we've had. Don't say anything to Cerenwen yet, Gwen, but it's not surprised I'll be if she's

weatherbound for the whole weekend. Dad's gone to see if they can move the ewes further down. We've lost enough already this year, what with short fodder, and all the snow and frost."

"I've got Mother," announced Cerenwen, arriving in the living-room whither they had gone. "She hadn't heard about the bus, so she hadn't begun to worry. But she says she's glad I didn't try to walk home, or I'd have got lost. The snow is simply awful up at Gwylt Dulas. It was bad enough coming over the fields, wasn't it, Gwen?"

"Hair-raising," agreed Gwen, pulling chairs to the table.

The two schoolgirls were so hungry, and so full of their trying walk over the field, that they never noticed that the mistress of the house ate little and kept listening all the time. But when they had finished, and Gwen began to clear away the soiled plates and cups, she could hide her anxiety no longer.

"What's the matter, Auntie?" asked Cerenwen when Mrs. Evans came into the scullery where they were washing up, and opened the outer door to gaze into the darkness. "Uncle will be all right."

"He's been gone a long time," Mrs. Evans replied as she came in, her shoulders powdered with the snow.

"It's a bit of a walk up the valley to where the sheep are likely to be," Gwen reminded her. "Ivor's with him, and they've got the dogs, too, haven't they? Tell you what! We'll finish the chores and then have a game of rummy."

"The chores are done," said Mrs. Evans. "Bert did the milking and shut up the chickens for me. Run and get some more logs, Gwen, and make up the kitchen fire. Dad and Ivor will be

frozen when they get back. I—what's that?"—as her quick ear caught sounds outside.

The outer door opened, and two big figures, so smothered in snow that they looked like snowmen, entered. The slighter one turned and shut the door, but not before a thin carpeting of snow lay at the entrance.

"There's a night it is!" gasped Mr. Evans, mopping his brow with his handkerchief after he had pulled off his cap. "The snow's drifting badly already. Where are the dogs?"

Two shaggy forms which had slipped in after their masters came forward, shaking themselves as they did so, and the farmer bent to clap their sides. "Good dogs these are, and no mistake! That you, Cerenwen? You'll not get home this side of Sunday."

"Drifting, did you say, Uncle?" Cerenwen's blue eyes looked anxious. "I hope not! Last storm we were drifted halfway up the downstairs windows."

The farmer nodded. "It always drifts badly at Gwylt Dwlas. But

your mother will be all right. She's got the girls, hasn't she?"

"Oh, yes. Megan and Dilys are there; and Artie Thomas, too."

"She'll be right enough, then. It's the sheep I'm worried about. We'll be lucky if we save half our lambs this year, I'm thinking."

"Quarter, more like," put in Ivor, pulling off his heavy rubber boots.

When the hungry men had eaten, Mr. and Mrs. Evans vanished into the kitchen to discuss the sheep, while the girls cleared the table, washed up, and then returned to the living-room to talk with Ivor.



The door opened, and two snow-covered figures entered

Bed was early for all of them, and for once Gwen was glad to share her bed with someone. The wind sounded so terrible, howling down the wide chimneys, and shaking the deep-set windows. But she was tired and after a strenuous day, and school, and that dizzying walk over the fields, she soon fell asleep.

Next morning a shock awaited them. "I'm just going out to the yard to have a look round," said Mr. Evans. "You might give Ivor a call. I want to get off as soon as I can and see what those ewes are doing."

Mrs. Evans had been staring out of the window. Now she turned round. "You'll dig your way out first, my dear. Drifted right up to the top of the window it is. Look!"

"What?" He swung round, and went quickly to the scullery, where he unbolted the outer door and tugged it open. A mass of soft snow followed it into the house, and he was staring out into the heart of a huge drift that had risen above the lintel.

With an exclamation he sprang up the stairs to the landing-window. He threw up the sash, and leaned out. Very little below the sill he was looking on the surface of the snow, which was still falling heavily.

"Snowed up we are!" he said, despair in his voice. "That drift must be all of ten feet deep."

"Wha's tha', Dad?" demanded Ivor from the upper stairs.

"Ten-foot drift at the back here. Another at the front. We're drifted up."

"Then heaven help the ewes, poor beasts!" ejaculated Ivor, his sleepiness vanishing as he took in the news. "Let's look!"

His father stood aside, and he peered out. "True enough; so we are. And if



He threw up the sash and leaned out.

it's like this here, what'll it be like in the gulch?" He thought a moment. Then he ran downstairs, and into a long, passage-like room where various oddments were kept. This had a window looking from the side of the house. He flung this up, and gave an exclamation of relief. "No drifting here! The house would protect it. Snow's a good three feet deep, though. Still, we can dig a way through to the doors. But the ewes——" He stopped there, and shook his head.

"Get dressed, then," said his father. "A mug of tea, and then I'll get out and begin. It'll need to be tunnelled, I reckon. Take us all day to dig paths through those drifts."

In less than twenty minutes' time the men were hard at work, digging a tunnel through the big drift at the back.

That was a strange day. Mr. Evans and Ivor finally managed to free the back door. They fed the cattle and poultry, and the girls helped to milk the

cows, for it was certain none of the men would get to the farm.

Next morning was gloriously sunny. The men of the family had been out seeing to such of the stock as were at hand, and were halfway through breakfast when Gwen and Cerenwen, very shamefaced at having overslept themselves, appeared. They hurried through their meal, and helped to put up big parcels of sandwiches and cans of tea. Ivor tucked the little methylated lamp his mother used for heating her curling-tongs into his pocket, together with some of the solid fuel. Then he and his father set off with Tinker and Rascal, the two dogs, to look for the sheep.

It was after five when they returned, very tired and hungry. Mr. Evans looked very grim. They had not been able to reach the ewes. The mouth of the valley was drifted up with great drifts, and it would need the snow-plough to clear them.

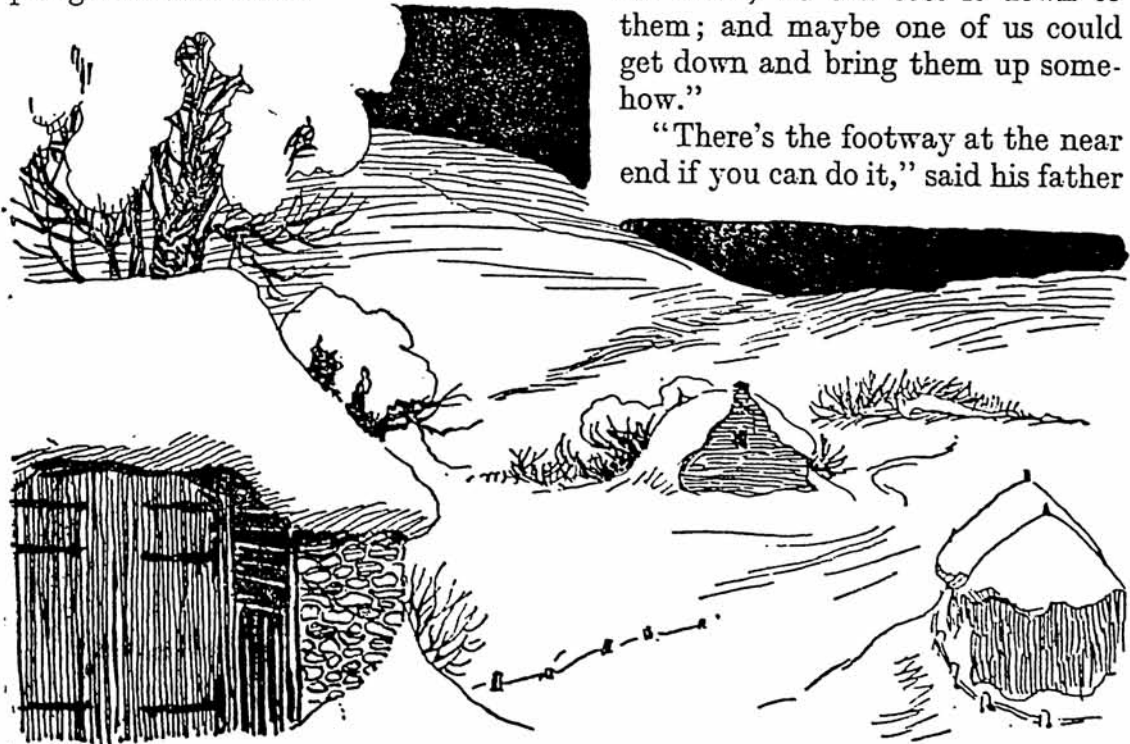
"Unless they got into the cleft, Dad," suggested Gwen, bringing him a heaped-up plate of meat and vegetables. "Some of them may have escaped that way."

He shook his head. "I doubt it. Sheep are silly beasts. More likely they just lay or stood where they were, and are buried beneath the snow. The dogs were nosing all round, but they never came up with them."

Next day they muffled up and set off again, returning at dinner-time to say they had found seven of the ewes that had been at the nearer end of the valley. They had brought them down, and put them into the barn. But the main flock, over three hundred, must be at the mountain end of the gulch.

"I'm going to try to climb up to the top of the cleft," said Ivor as they finished. "Dad, I'll take Frank Owen and Bert Griffiths with me. We'll take ropes and some fodder. If the sheep are there, we can toss it down to them; and maybe one of us could get down and bring them up somehow."

"There's the footway at the near end if you can do it," said his father



Thick snow lay everywhere

doubtfully. "But I doubt if any of you could get through. It's narrow above, that cleft is."

No one saw Gwen and Cerenwen exchange looks; but when dinner was cleared and the things washed up Gwen said to her mother, "Mayn't we go out, Mummy? We've been shut in so long."

"Yes; run along with you," said Mrs. Evans indulgently. "Tea is at five, so don't be late."

"All right," agreed Gwen. "Come on, Cerenwen. We'd better put on our breeches and leggings. Yours are here from our last ride."

They ran off, and presently came down, looking very trim and business-like in their riding-kit, with closely fitting wool caps pulled down over their ears.

"I know Ivor won't get through the cleft," said Gwen as they set off. "Nor Bert or Frank, either. *You* only just did it last summer. Come on! This way! Thank goodness we can go faster than they, for they've trodden down a sort of path."

Making all the haste they could, the two girls followed in the wake of Ivor and the men; but even with the help of the track it was hard going, and they had reached the mouth of the little valley before Cerenwen's quick eyes saw her cousin and his helpers ahead of them. At the same time something made Ivor turn, and he saw the girls.

"What are you two doing here?" he demanded when they were within hailing distance.

"Don't be cross, Ivor bach," said Gwen coaxingly. "We've come to go down the cleft for you. *You'll* never get through. Cerenwen nearly stuck

last summer, so *you* couldn't do it. But you've got ropes, and I'm a skin-nigallee, as Dad says, and she may be able to do it in breeches. Come on; tea is at five, and Mummy said we weren't to be late. If we're very late, she'll worry. Ivor, you *can't* be mad with me. We *must* save the ewes and lambs if we can."

Ivor said no more. He knew far better than his young sister how heavily his father would be hit if all the flock were lost. And he also knew that what Gwen had said about the cleft was true. Unless they could reach it from the mouth, which seemed unlikely, it was impossible for any of the men to get through. But the slim schoolgirls might manage it; and both Gwen and Cerenwen were strong as mountain ponies. They might be able to bring up any lambs, and help the stronger of the ewes to get up the rough end of the cleft. He turned, nodded to the men, and they went on.

They did not attempt to go up the valley. The drifts were too deep. But on the bare slopes of the mountain the snow had blown down, and it was possible to get along, though the going was slow. It was almost three before they finally struggled up to the place where the cleft opened to the surface. It was a narrow cut which widened considerably as it went down. If the sheep were there, they would have had a chance of escaping being buried, though how they would be when they were found was another question.

There was little doubt that some, at least, of the poor animals had taken shelter, for they could hear the sound of plaintive baa-ings as they reached the opening, and Gwen's face glowed when she heard the sounds.

"Some of them are alive, anyhow!" she cried. "Rope me, Ivor; I'm going down at once."

"Me, too," added Cerenwen. "Gwen, I'll go first. Got your torch, Ivor? It'll be dark in there."

Ivor handed her a large torch on a leather strap, which she slung round her neck. They roped her, for it was

on the floor of the cleft, where they surged round her as if knowing that help had come at last.

Meantime, Gwen was crawling down, feeling her way as well as she could. Cerenwen turned the torch to give her light, and at length the two cousins stood among the ewes. They could see that at least eighty or ninety were



They coiled the rope round a tree-stump and lowered the girl

plain that she must be lowered half-way along the crack, though slender Gwen was already casting aside her coat, and preparing to worm her way in at the narrow end. When all was ready, they coiled the rope round the stump of a felled tree near, and let her slowly down.

Cerenwen directed the light of her torch downwards, while with her free hand she clung to the rope. She could see a mass of woolly bodies beneath her, and she was nearly deafened by the cries of the sheep. It was difficult to get a footing, for the frightened animals were huddled closely together; but at length she managed it, and stood

there, and there were a few new-born lambs lying at the sides with their mothers by them, uttering feeble cries.

"What had we best do?" asked Cerenwen, flashing the light round.

"I'll take this lamb," said Gwen, scooping it up in her arm. "Give me a light, Cerenwen. The mother will follow sure, and you can shoo the rest after her. Once they get going, they'll all go. But indeed I don't know how we're to get them all through the snow once they are up."

"One thing at a time. We'll get them up first. You go on, and I'll play sheepdog. I wish Ivor had brought Tinker or Rascal with him."



"Dad took them both because he was going to try to get round to the head of the valley," said Gwen as she made a sling of her scarf, and settled her baby comfortably in it. Its anxious-faced mother came to her at once, and she laughed. "All right, silly! I won't hurt it. You follow me!" And she turned and struggled to the upward track through the rest, followed by the terrified but faithful mother.

What a climb that was! Gwen dared not use both hands to help herself, for she dared not trust to the sling. Over and over again she slipped and nearly fell; but she managed to keep her footing somehow. Meanwhile, Cerenwen was doing her part by shooing the feeble sheep after her, and Gwen had to be careful that they did not knock her down and trample on her. Luckily, as she climbed, the light grew, and she was able to see her way.

Ivor and his helpers had not been idle, either. They had dragged sacks of hay with them on a big sledge, and now they had emptied it out, and roped the sacks to form a kind of hammock. He called down this news to Gwen, telling her to wait where she was, and when the litter was lowered to put her lamb in it, and to do the same with any others there.

"The ewes will have to come this way," he said. "They can't get through at this end. Call Cerenwen to come and help you if she can. We're going to



They lowered the sack to Gwen

scatter a little hay round the edges here, and that will keep the sheep going."

It was an easy matter to put the tiny lamb into the litter; but Gwen had her own difficulties with its mother, who wanted to come, too. However, she managed at last, and the poor baby was drawn to the surface.

"Can you manage the ewe?" asked Ivor. Then he suddenly exclaimed: "Dad! What luck! The girls are down there, and some of the flock are there, at any rate. Send the dogs to round them up, and then Cerenwen can help Gwen put them into this affair. It's rather much for a kid to do alone"—which made Gwen yearn to box his ears.

"The girls!" ejaculated Mr. Evans in horror.

But it was no time to worry about the girls. The dogs were sent down the cleft, and in a very short time Cerenwen had joined Gwen. By pushing and struggling, they got the frightened ewes one by one into the hammock, when the men drew them to the surface.

Mr. Evans sent Bert Griffiths to tell Mrs. Evans where the girls were, and when he returned he brought with him a long, thin individual, Thomas Thomas by name, who contrived to get through the cleft where Cerenwen had gone, and who lightened the work considerably. Struggling with a large ewe, even when she is weak with hunger, is no light job for even two girls. With Thomas Thomas to help, it was much easier.

One by one the ewes and lambs were brought up; the famished ewes were given a few handfuls of hay to keep them going, and then entrusted to the

care of wise old Tinker, who had been sent up when Thomas Thomas came. The night had fallen before the last one was rescued. Then the girls were drawn up; Rascal scrambled to the surface on her own paddy paws; and Thomas Thomas came last.

The girls were filthy past description, and their clothes ragged and torn with their struggles; but they were triumphant. Ninety-seven sheep had been found, and eleven lambs besides. The girls and as many lambs as possible were put on the sledge, and the men carried the other babies among them, leaving the ewes to the dogs.

It was past ten before they reached the farm, and nearly six in the morning before Mr. Evans came in from the great barn where the poor beasts had been housed for the time being. By that time, Gwen and Cerenwen were sleeping deeply.

By the end of the week, twenty-two more lambs were brought in, and more of the ewes were found and brought to safety. Many were lost, of course; but quite half the flock were saved.

"It's really thanks to you two," Mr. Evans told Cerenwen as he bade her goodbye when Friday came and she was able at last to go home, since the snowploughs had been out and the roads partly cleared. "We've lost a lot, I know; but it might have been very much worse. I'm proud of you both."

"I'm only glad we were able to help, Uncle," replied Cerenwen, as she shouldered her satchel.

"So am I!" cried Gwen, at her side. "But what will happen to our exams in the summer with all we've lost this term is more than I can say!"



DOG OF MY DREAMS

by Phyllis Briggs

Babs had always wanted a dog, and she had never had one. Something had always been in the way. When her only relation, Uncle John Cromer, had lived in Town, it had been:

"No, of course you can't have a dog in a flat, and with all this traffic! Wait until I retire next year and take you to live in the country!"

They had been three years in the country now, and still Babs was dogless.

"I only want a little one," she whispered tearfully and wistfully to the sunset view from her dormer window, "a very small fellow with a pushing damp nose and black spots on his coat."

She planned his meals and his big bone on Sunday. All proper dogs, she knew, liked a big bone. The bone they always held gripped by the strong curved nails of their front paws. Then, because their front teeth were so

queerly short, they laid their heads sideways to the bone as if their back teeth were giant shears and the bone was a hedge they were intent on cutting.

She loved to watch, and listen to the cracking and the little happy whines of dog enjoyment.

John Cromer was not unkind, but he was a scientist and was absent-minded and short-tempered because human affairs were to him small and unimportant.

The sudden thought came to Babs that perhaps Uncle had only forgotten about the dog, and simply needed reminding about it.

"I'll ask him after dinner," she told herself, and her heart thudded just a bit quicker than usual at the thought.

She put on her Sunday frock. She felt very grown-up. Her gold-coloured hair was brushed so that each curl of it glowed as if it were real gold that

had been melted and poured over her head.

"Babsy, you look very nice," said Uncle John Cromer, when she went into the dining-room. "What have you done to yourself?"

"It is my newest frock, but I've worn it seven Sundays already!"

"Have you, dear?" Uncle said absently. "I never noticed it before. It's not much fun for you with me, I am afraid."

She looked up at that, her sweet brown eyes sad.

"I am sometimes so lonely, although there's Cook and the gardener and his jolly little pony!"

"Good gracious! Do you make a friend of a pony?"

Seeing her chance, Babs said quickly: "Could I have a dog?"

"Why, bless me, yes, child! Haven't you got a dog?"

Tears filled her eyes. How exactly like Uncle John to say that!

"No, of course I haven't," she said.

"Well, well, well! Of course you shall have a dog. But—" he paused and fixed her with a stern glance—"you must do all the work for it yourself, and not bother anyone else. That's one rule I make and I shall stick to it."

Babs flushed with excitement. Fancy anyone wanting to leave such jolly jobs for another to do!

"Let me see—tomorrow is Saturday," said Uncle. "Go into Chesterby by bus and buy a dog at the pet shop!"

Babs could not taste whether it were roast lamb and mint or suet pudding on her plate!

"Any kind I like?"

"Oh, yes, any."

"I'll got a silky one," she said, "and

he's going to be a happy dog. No learning silly tricks just to please humans. He shall go runs and rabbitings, and eat meat and biscuits, and not ruin his teeth with tea and bread-and-milk. I've looked it all up in books!"

"You'll want some money," Uncle John Cromer said, uncertain as to how much such things as puppies cost. "How much do you suppose?"

Babs clasped her hands in an agony of doubt. How awful to ask too much, or, worse still, not enough! Dogs were sure to cost ever such a lot of money when you thought of how wonderfully they were made, with their floppy paws and wagging tails.

"I don't know," she faltered, her lips dry with dread of being refused a dog, after all.

But Uncle John Cromer pulled out a pound note.

"He's not likely to cost more than that. But, mind, no spending it on sweets or losing it in any way and then coming to me for more!"

She was much too happy to mind this slur upon her carefulness.

"Thank you, oh, thank you!" she cried, and flung her arms round his neck and kissed him, a thing she had never dared to do before. He seemed strangely pleased.

Babs wanted to go alone to choose her new pet. So she slipped away the next day and caught the two o'clock bus into Chesterby. Never before had the rolling countryside looked so beautiful, the orchards so full, or the corn so golden. She felt like singing and shouting all the way; she had to sit squeezing her hands together in her excitement. How much would her pound buy? A spotted dog, or one of those fluffy ones with prick ears that

always looked so adorably like stuffed toys?

She had just decided on the fluffy dog when the bus ran into the outskirts of Chesterby and another person got in and sat down close beside her. There was not much room, and she was rather hemmed in.

"If I go and get a terrier because he looks perfect in the shop and then on the way home find it ought to have been a collie, I shall be miserable, and Uncle wouldn't let me change," she said to herself. "I wonder which is the best kind?"

She glanced up at the man sitting beside her, and felt sorry for him because he seemed unhappy. He looked thin, and she wondered whether he had not liked his dinner, or whether he had had no dinner to like. From thinking of dinners she got to thinking of money to buy them with, and so for the tenth time she opened her small bag to look at her dog money.

"I wonder if he has a dog of his own?" she thought. "I believe he has, because there are some silky golden hairs on his coat-sleeve."

Suddenly the lovely rose colour drained from her cheeks. Her pink fingers scrabbled wildly among the things in her bag. There was her notebook, three pencils, a purse, and one clean handkerchief; but the pound note had gone!

Babs remembered how the man had been pushed against her as the bus jolted round a corner. Surely he couldn't have taken her pound note without her knowing! Yet it had gone, and he was poor and hungry. She almost cried out aloud about her loss before all the busful of folk.

"But what shall I do? What ought

I to do?" she thought desperately. "I don't care how hungry he is, I want my dog! Perhaps I could buy a slightly smaller puppy, after all, and he could keep enough for some sandwiches!"

At the bus halt she and the man got out. Babs knew now what she was going to do.

"I'll track him to his house, and tell him we'll share, so that he can have a good feed."

This resolve made her cheerful again. The man soon dived into a doorway and up some stone steps to a landing with three doors. He opened one, slamming it behind him with a bang that shook little flakes of plaster off the walls.

Babs knocked.

At first she was afraid he was so cross he wasn't going to come, but the door opened, and there he stood, frowning. The frown faded and a smile took its place, a nice smile that quite chased the hungry, unhappy look away.

"Hullo, sprat!" he said.

"My name's Babs, not Sprat," she said.

"Well, come in, anyway. What can I do for you? What is wrong?" He must have been a noticing young man.

She felt very frightened all at once, but she remembered that somewhere, in a pet shop, a dog would be sitting looking out at the passers-by and sobbing in his throat every little while because no one ever came in to ask about *him*, and what his price was.

"I thought we could share it, if you don't mind," she began, as she went in. "I hate you being so hungry, but you could get a lovely dinner for ten shillings!"

"I'll say I could," he laughed, and then became deadly serious. "Here, what is all this? Who's throwing away ten shillings on dinners?"

Babs glanced about her, not quite knowing what to say next. It was the queerest kind of room, for pictures hung everywhere and were stacked against the walls and all over the floor.



"Hullo, sprat!" he said

There were all kinds of pictures, some finished and some half finished, many ugly, but some really beautiful.

"Like them?" he asked, following her gaze.

"I don't know yet; I haven't looked at them enough." Then she hurried on: "I know you couldn't help taking it, and I don't want to be mean, but can I have ten shillings back? I want a dog of my very own!"

The young man's face was a mixture of anger, amazement and laughter.

"I don't think I quite get this. Did you say you thought I'd taken something of yours?"



"You sat next to me in the bus!"

"That's where I've seen your face before! What was it that you lost?"

"A pound note—a whole pound. It was in my bag."

"Well, let's look in your bag."

Taking her bag, he opened it. Then Babs' pansy-brown eyes widened. He had turned back the lining and fished out the missing note!

"It had just slipped in behind there," he explained kindly. "I've had it happen myself in the lining of coats."

Babs stood up, crimson to the roots of her hair. Nothing so awful as this had ever, ever happened to her.

"Thank you," she said in stifled tones. "Please—I'm terrible sorry that I thought you had—had stolen it."

"That's all right, Babs. It was

quite natural that you should. There's no harm done, so forget it and come and look at my pictures."

She thought he was the very nicest man she had ever met. "I must do something to show how sorry I am," she thought, and a sudden, lovely idea came to her. It would mean giving up all those lovely dreams of a dog, but she felt that there was nobody else in the world to whom she would so much enjoy giving her pound as this young man whom she had thought was a thief.

The struggle with herself was hard, but when they stopped opposite the painting of a cocker spaniel whose golden-brown eyes beseeched her and whose paws were so wonderfully painted that you felt you could take them and shake, her mind was made up.

"Do you ever sell your pictures, Mr. Lessing?"

She felt that it was really clever of her to have noticed his name across the corner of the painting.

"Why, yes, Babs, now and then," he replied cheerfully.

"How—how much is that one?" She pointed at the dog. She almost fancied there was a flicker of delight in the painted doggy eyes. At any moment the soft rosy tongue might come darting out between the white teeth to snake softly at her fingers. The long ears were covered in wavy brown hair that ended in curly bits. His nose was black; his eyes were laughing at her. He was a perfect picture dog—but still only a picture.

Babs dared not look at the young man, Mr. Lessing, so she did not see his mouth drop open or see the surprise in his nice eyes.

"It—it wouldn't be a pound, would it?" she asked hopefully.

"Yes, Babs; that's just what it is—one pound, and I am very flattered that you want it."

She squeezed his hand, because she felt sure that she had found a real friend in him. Although there was an awful ache inside her because she wasn't going to have a real, live dog, she was glad that she had been able to give Mr. Lessing the pound and so



"How—how much is that one?" asked Babs

make up for accusing him of stealing her money.

"Now tell me where you live," Mr. Lessing said, "and after tea I'll put you on your bus and wrap up your picture for you."

It was not till hours later, when she stood outside the study door, that Babs thought about what she would say to her uncle.

"I am not going to be a squeaky baby," she thought stoutly, and went in.

"Hullo, child! Well, well, did you get a nice dog?"

"I got this dog!" She peeled off the covers. Uncle John Cromer's eyes bulged.

"What on earth have you been up to? So this is what you do when I turn my back on you! You tell me you want a dog, and then go and buy a daub by a twopenny-halfpenny artist."

"He wasn't a twopenny-halfpenny artist!" Babs cried, and found to her surprise that she was not a scrap afraid of Uncle John Cromer and his short temper.

"Where did you meet him? What was he like?"

"I'll tell you if you won't shout so," Babs replied, and Uncle sat there looking at her oddly.

He looked at her even more oddly when he had heard all her adventure. He said very little else, but mumbled to her to go and get some supper and get to bed like a good girl.

Once in bed, Babs wept for the loss of her truly alive puppy. The painted dog that she had propped up so that the moonlight fell on it smiled a happy, doggy smile at her until she fell asleep.

Two days later, her uncle called her into the library. He was talking to a

young man who had called on him, and the two of them had made some surprising discoveries. The young man was Peter Lessing, a gifted young artist whose pictures were already famous.

"Babs, this young man wants us to do him a favour," Uncle John Cromer said gruffly. "He finds he hasn't room in his place for the original of that painting of yours, and wondered if we could give it a home. D'you think we could, eh?"

Babs felt the room rocking. "The original?"

"Yes," the young man explained. "You didn't think I painted that one and made it all up out of my own head? No! Silk Prince is a real dog, but I am so busy now that he is too much of a handful for me. I was so hopeful that you would help me that I brought him along!"

He heaved a hamper off the floor. Babs' face was white with excitement. Yes, there were the brown flopsy ears and the pushing nose and the velvety eyes, only asking to be wanted and loved.

"Oh, may I truly look after him?" she asked breathlessly.

"If you'll take him for your very own, I'll be really glad, because I shall know he'll be properly looked after."

"*Darling!*" Babs said, but she was talking to the dog. She had forgotten everything else.

Peter Lessing stayed to supper, and Silk Prince sat by Babs' chair. Even Uncle John Cromer was so pleased about everything that he actually went down to the kitchen to find a ham-bone for the dog that had come to stay.



ROSALIND TO THE RESCUE

by

Douglas V. Duff

Rosalind Donaldson had become increasingly anxious ever since she found that Janet Skeine was nowhere about the Residency. Janet had been at breakfast, which she and her fifteen-year-old chum had shared with Colonel Donaldson, the District Commissioner of Southern Judea, shortly after seven that morning in the big, cool, vaulted dining-room of the old Arab house.

Rosalind, who had been very busy for a couple of hours after her father left on one of his long tours of inspection, had not missed her friend until about ten o'clock. There was a great deal for her to do in the old Residency, where the Arab servants had been used to looking on her as their mistress ever since her mother died, three years before. In fact, until Rosalind went to Stonebarrow Abbey School in England when she was thirteen, she had acted

as the Residency's hostess and had supervised all the domestic details of the District Commissioner's household.

Even being away at school made very little difference, for the air-liners brought her back to Ain el Assad for all her holidays, even the short Easter vacation. Rosalind spoke Arabic as fluently as she did English, for she was born in Palestine and brought up there, and with her dark hair and great limpid brown eyes she could easily have passed for a high-class Arab maiden, and often did so. This was even more likely when, as now, almost at the end of the long summer vacation, her face and hands were tinted to a warm bronze by long hours spent in the saddle and on the Residency tennis-courts.

Janet Skeine was one of her closest friends at Stonebarrow Abbey; they



ROSALIND RODE OUT AT THE HEAD OF THE DISGUISED PATROL

were in the same form and they shared one of the double-cubicles. It had been an understood thing, ever since the previous Christmas, that Janet would be the guest of Colonel Donaldson and his daughter in Palestine for the next summer holidays. Janet had enjoyed the strangeness of her new life at first, but after a few weeks things had started to pall on her. She began to show facets of her character that made Rosalind rather doubtful about the wisdom of her choice of friends. Janet had angrily refused to see that the Colonel was right in never allowing the girls to ride into the hills without a heavy escort of British police, or even to go down into the little Arab town without at least two armed constables in their company.

When she was taken round the great shrines in Jerusalem and Bethlehem with as many armed men around her as if she had been Royalty visiting a rebellious province, Janet became really annoyed, and there had been an unpleasant scene or two. Altogether, Colonel Donaldson was not in the least unhappy that in four days time his daughter and her troublesome girlfriend would be catching the flying-boat at Haifa for their return to school. He had read poor Rosalind a lecture on the shortcomings of her friend, and begged her to be more careful in her choice of guests in the future.

That was why Rosalind was so anxious when she found Janet was missing. She was even more troubled when Ali Ahmet, the old Arab mounted sergeant, came in and told her that "Kalb-en-Nar", the big roan stallion, was missing, as well as a set of saddlery which had been loaned to Miss Skeine.

"I have just heard from Corporal

Idris el Shedid, who says he saw the young *sitt* [lady] riding down the trail towards the Dead Sea," the grizzled sergeant reported.

Rosalind gasped. The trail through the Dry Hills was one of the most dangerous in the whole of Palestine. Down in the rugged, grey-white, sharp-coned mountains of the Wilderness of Judah there were many strange and lawless characters. The Palestine police did not worry very much about these outlaws, so long as they were not 'wanted' for some very desperate crime and kept inside the Wilderness, where they could do no harm to anyone other than people as bad as themselves.

She knew where Janet had gone, for the girl had been talking about visiting the ancient ruins of the castle of Masada ever since reading, in some guide-book, that the camps of the Roman Legion which had destroyed the last Jewish fortress after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were still almost perfect. Janet had even asked Colonel Donaldson if he could arrange for an escort to take her there, but he had been rather annoyed at what he considered a very inconsiderate and selfish request. He had refused, saying that such a trip would require at least a dozen troopers, and would be a tiring and unnecessary journey for men already sadly over-worked.

Sergeant Ali Ahmet looked grave when Rosalind told him what she feared.

"Surely it is true that the Ingleez give too much liberty to their women-folk," the old Arab said gravely, although his eyes twinkled affectionately as he looked at the fresh and bonny face before him. He had known Rosalind ever since he had helped old

Um Hassan, her first nurse, to push her perambulator into the shade of the big trees at the far end of the Residency lawn. "The *sitt* must be instantly followed and persuaded to return."

"Never mind about the persuasion, Sergeant Ali," Rosalind snapped. "Please go after her and *make* her come back. If she refuses, treat her as you would a rebellious daughter of your own. Stand no nonsense, but bring her back whether she wishes to come or not."

He looked down at her, "I shall need to take at least four troopers with me, *Sitt Werdi*," he said slowly. *Werdi*, which means 'Rose', was the name the Arabs of her father's district had always given Rosalind. "And, always supposing that some evil has not meanwhile overtaken her, I shall be fortunate if I can return with her before the sun sets. However, I will do all that a man can."

He saluted gravely, and a few

minutes later Rosalind saw her friend riding out of the Residency gates, with three young Arab troopers on their sturdy stallions close behind him. She watched them until they turned off the village-road and took the narrow trail to the east.

Rosalind was really angry, and she meant to give Janet a very full piece of her mind when she returned; but as the hours passed and the afternoon turned towards evening her irritation changed to a deepening anxiety. Then, as she stared eastwards, she saw a rolling cloud of dust on the track from the Dead Sea, which lay several thousand feet below, and fifteen miles away. As the cloud drew nearer she saw that it was caused by the four Arab policemen, who did not slacken their headlong pace until they reined in their sweat-lathered and foaming horses in the paved square of the Residency.

Rosalind ran down to meet them as the old sergeant, with his face and



Four Arab policemen came riding out of the cloud of dust

uniform masked in white dust, through which his eyes glittered anxiously, hurried towards her.

"Sitt Werdi," he said, his hand raised in the Arab salutation, "I have the most grievous news for you. The stranger *sitt* has been kidnapped by a gang of foreign outlaws. The villains sent this message by the hand of a shepherd boy, who gave it to us on the road down there."

He held out a scrap of paper, which looked as though it had been torn from a notebook, and Rosalind read:

*To District Commissioner,
Ain el Assad*

Take notice that we hold the English girl prisoner. She will be unharmed and well treated so long as no attempt is made to rescue her. She will be held as a hostage for our girl comrade, Miriam, who lies under sentence of death in Jerusalem Prison. Your girl's fate will be whatever your Government gives to Miriam. If Miriam dies, this girl dies. If Miriam is kept in prison we shall keep the girl as our own captive. If Miriam goes free, your girl goes free. We will instantly execute our hostage if there are any unusual troop or police movements to rescue her. You will realise we mean what we say when we sign ourselves

*The High Command
of the Brotherhood*

This was even worse than Rosalind's very worst fears! Rosalind ordered the sergeant to take the letter to the Divisional Inspector and to give him his news, and then, half an hour later, she went down to see Inspector Stevens herself.

"I am very sorry, Miss Rosalind," the weather-beaten British police-officer said, after he had settled the girl in a chair at the far side of his paper-cluttered desk, "but there is very little we can do. If we sent big patrols down into the Wilderness it is almost sure that these brutes will murder Miss Skeine right away. It's a risk we daren't take."

"Surely you're not going to allow her to remain in their hands without making any show of rescuing her?" she asked, indignantly. "Why, it may be an ordinary kidnapping plot and have nothing political about it at all. It's probably just a barefaced attempt to extort a big ransom."

"I only wish it was," the Inspector said, with a sigh; "then it would be simple enough, for they would not want to kill her so long as there was any chance of getting their money. But I'm afraid that this letter is just what it sets itself to be. We have a woman named Miriam under sentence of death in Jerusalem Prison. She was caught red-handed as one of a gang who were throwing bombs into a soldiers' canteen near Jaffa. No, I'm afraid that Miss Skeine is a hostage for Miriam, and those brutes mean exactly what they say."

"But—but what are you going to do about it?" Rosalind cried, desperation in her face.

"Quite a lot, Miss Rosalind," Inspector Stevens replied. "The police have many means of doing things. We shall work in our own fashion and try to recover Miss Skeine without putting her in more danger of being murdered than we can avoid. Our main problem is that the execution of this woman is fixed for next Tuesday."

"But surely they won't execute her if it means murdering Janet," she cried, horror in her voice.

The officer looked very grave. "I really don't know what the Government will decide, Miss Rosalind," he said, his voice very troubled. "But I am sure that you can understand that something far bigger than the deaths of Miriam and Miss Skeine are involved. If every time one of the Brotherhood is caught, tried and condemned his or her associates kidnap some British person as a hostage, in the hope of forcing the Government to fail in its duty to exact justice, then the whole administration of the country must break down. That's why I am very much afraid that the Government will refuse to be intimidated, and will carry on with the execution of the woman Miriam. They can't afford to do anything else, can they?"

When Rosalind returned to her own rooms she had to admit the force and justice of what the Inspector had said. She was bitterly angry when she thought how Janet's wilfulness had caused so much trouble, but that was not what had to be considered at the moment. The vital need was to rescue her school-chum before the day fixed for the execution in Jerusalem.

But how could that be done? The police could not search the area in force, and it seemed likely that the Government dared not surrender to the lawless threat of the kidnappers. Janet could only be saved by escaping without the aid of the police or military. Yet even if she did manage to evade her guards, she was unlikely to get far away, for Janet knew no Arabic and was quite inexperienced in fending

for herself in the barren hills of the Wilderness of Judah. Unless she had a guide or a companion she could not hope to escape harsh privation and, most likely, death.

Rosalind soon reached the conclusion that she herself was the only guide who could be of the least service to the imprisoned girl. At first the very thought of it frightened her, but as she began to think it over her spirits rose, and she thought she could see a way out. She did not pause to consider her father's anxiety and distress, for she believed that he, in the depths of his heart, would approve what she meant to accomplish.

"After all," she told herself in a desperate attempt to justify what she was about to do, "there's no particular risk. Even if I don't find Janet I can always return home without anyone being the wiser. I *will* succeed, for I'm a better hillman than any of these city-bred Brethren, who are only in the Wilderness because they dare not come out into open country."

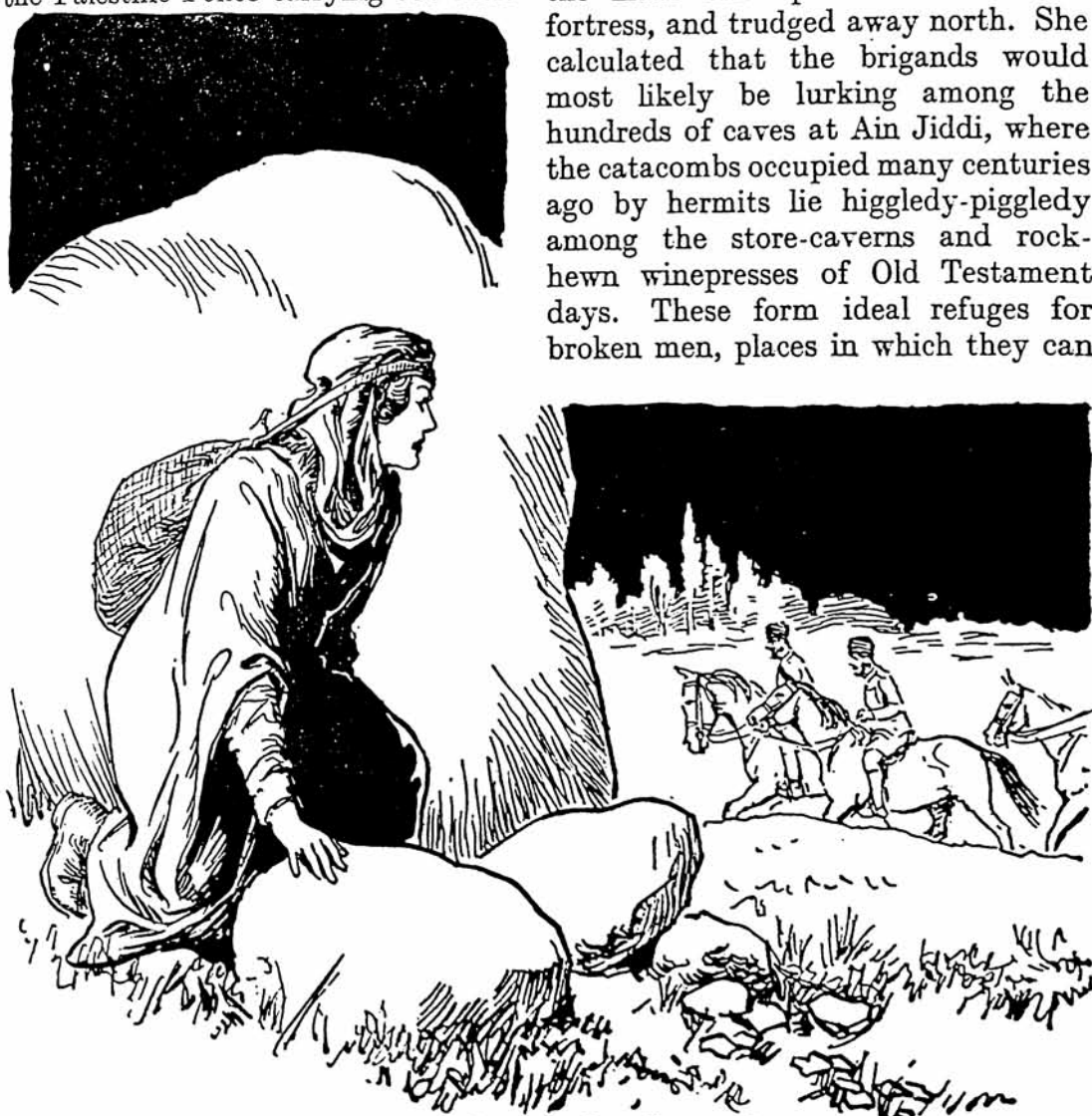
She wrote a hurried note for her father, in which she said that she would be away for a few days, and begged him not to worry more than he must, as she hoped to return with the missing Janet. She pointed out that it was hopeless to try to rescue the foolish girl in any other way, and begged her father not to spoil her chances and endanger her life by sending any of his men after her. She propped the envelope on his desk, where he would find it as soon as he entered the room, as she knew he would have cut short his inspection. She then returned to her own room, where she completed her preparations for the task she had set herself.

Just before midnight a Bedouin girl, with her bundle of charcoal slung from her forehead, stepped out of the side entrance of the Residency. Rosalind was well used to the long blue garments and the black, veiling head-cloths, while her feet were accustomed to the soft-tanned leather sand-boots which the tribes wear in their desert camps.

She trudged through the night and made good progress, although she once had to hide behind a big boulder close to the track to avoid a small patrol of the Palestine Police carrying out their

routine duties. By the time the dawn commenced to silver the distant sky above the Hills of Moab, east of the Dead Sea, she was well down the road to Masada. Her plan was to get into the broken country near Ain Jiddi, where a small waterfall breaks its way down the rugged headland of Ras Mersid before it drops into the Dead Sea a thousand feet below. She intended keeping her eyes and ears well open as she went along.

When dawn broke she turned off the main bridle-path to the ruined fortress, and trudged away north. She calculated that the brigands would most likely be lurking among the hundreds of caves at Ain Jiddi, where the catacombs occupied many centuries ago by hermits lie higgledy-piggledy among the store-caverns and rock-hewn winepresses of Old Testament days. These form ideal refuges for broken men, places in which they can



The boulder hid her from the police-patrol

easily defend themselves against overwhelming odds if they are attacked. Rosalind had often heard her father's Arab troopers talking about Ain Jiddi, saying that it would take a big military operation to dig out some of the outlaws who had fortified themselves in its grim fastnesses. Consequently she felt it to be almost certain that Janet would be imprisoned in one of the caves or galleries in that ancient maze.

The sun rose above the distant mountains, and its heat struck the barren slopes of the Dry Hills like the blast from an oven's mouth, but Rosalind kept steadily on along her way. She was bowed beneath the weight of her burden, but she plodded steadfastly along with the slow, measured and purposeful stride of a Bedouin girl, her forehead pressed against the broad black headband which held her load on her back. Arab-made charcoal, although it is very bulky, is not heavy, so that she was not too greatly distressed by the large package she carried, which weighed very little more than thirty pounds.

She rounded a scree of the mountain-side, with the blue waters of the Dead Sea four hundred feet below to her right. There she saw the first human being she had met since evading the police-patrol. He was a bearded man dressed in Arab garb. As she drew nearer to him, however, she saw that he was not an Arab, but some Outlander masquerading in Bedouin clothes. With a quick shiver of dread, she saw that he must also be an outlaw, for he carried a rifle and crossed bandoliers of ammunition on his chest. The carrying of arms was a crime for which hanging was the penalty, and

she braced herself to face her first real danger.

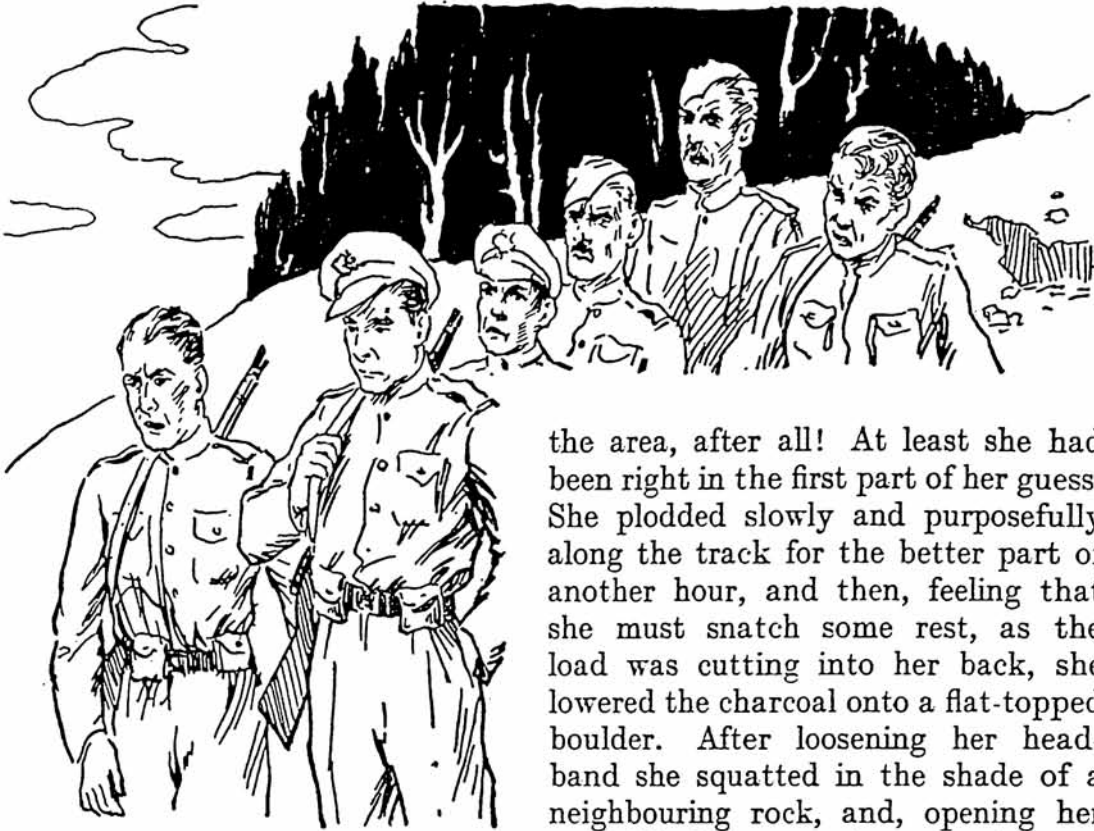
"Where are you going, maiden?" the man asked brusquely, and she had confirmation that he was no Arab, for he spoke the old tongue ungrammatically and with a heavy accent.

She pretended to be as startled as any Bedouin girl would have been. She stood quite still, staring at him with frightened eyes set in a face which was masked by the dust her feet had raised during her long tramp.

"Do you dare address an honest maiden who is merely passing to her people?" she asked in a timid voice, using the ordinary reproach which a girl in her position would employ. "It is shameful for a strange man to speak to a lone maid of another tribe who wishes only for innocent passage."



She stared at the intruders



They were members of the terrible Brotherhood

In a deep voice the man growled that he wanted no nonsense but a plain answer. Who was she and where was she going? He looked very threatening.

"I go to my people, who are encamped beyond Nebi Musa, to the north of this place," she replied. "Let me pass peaceably; then I will not tell the men of my people that I was stopped by a strange man."

"Those mangy brutes know better than to thrust their noses into this place," the man grunted. "All right, get along, but keep away from Ain Jiddi in future. This area is forbidden to sand-rats like you."

Rosalind said nothing, but, bent beneath her load, started off again along her road, feeling very much more hopeful than she had done for some time. So there *were* foreign outlaws in

the area, after all! At least she had been right in the first part of her guess. She plodded slowly and purposefully along the track for the better part of another hour, and then, feeling that she must snatch some rest, as the load was cutting into her back, she lowered the charcoal onto a flat-topped boulder. After loosening her headband she squatted in the shade of a neighbouring rock, and, opening her goat-skin bag, started to munch some dates and a flat Arab loaf which she had been carrying in it.

A few minutes later footsteps sounded on the hillside above her, but she munched steadily away until the shadows of several men fell across her. Rosalind gave a subdued little whimper and then whisked the corner of her headcloth across her face, her eyes glinting across the hem of it to stare at the intruders. It was the normal thing which any modest Bedouin girl would have done, and her act of concealment roused no comment from the six men in European clothes who stood staring down at her. They, too, were all heavily armed, and she knew that they could only be members of the terrible Brotherhood.

"It's only a sand-rat Arab girl," one man said in German, a language which was well taught at Stonebarrow Abbey.

"No good interfering with her. It'll only mean trouble with her flea-bitten relations, who are camped near Nebi Musa. Come on, Hans, we'd better be getting down to garrison the outpost. That confounded District Commissioner at Ain el Assad may already be bringing troops and police this way, and that's the best place to stop them."

"He won't be such a fool," a second ruffian replied. "He knows that we'll roll that whey-faced English girl's head down the hillside in his teeth if he tries to make any trouble. We shan't see a sign of the Palestine Police if we stay there a fortnight." He turned to the cowering Bedouin

girl, and in extremely bad Arabic asked her where she was going, grunting savagely when Rosalind replied that she was only taking charcoal to her father's tent near Nebi Musa from the charring-kilns south of Hebron.

"I told you so," the brute said to his companions. "No good wasting time here. Come on! If we don't get down to the Post, the Leader will shoot us for mutiny."

Rosalind remained crouched in the dust, with her makeshift veil held before her face, until the men disappeared down the track and were hidden behind a shoulder of the hill. But behind the dingy covering her thoughts were racing very fast. She had been right! Janet was here, hidden in some of the caverns and galleries of Ain Jiddi!

What would be her best plan? What line of action should she pursue? The answer came in a flash of pure inspira-



A hard-faced European woman came

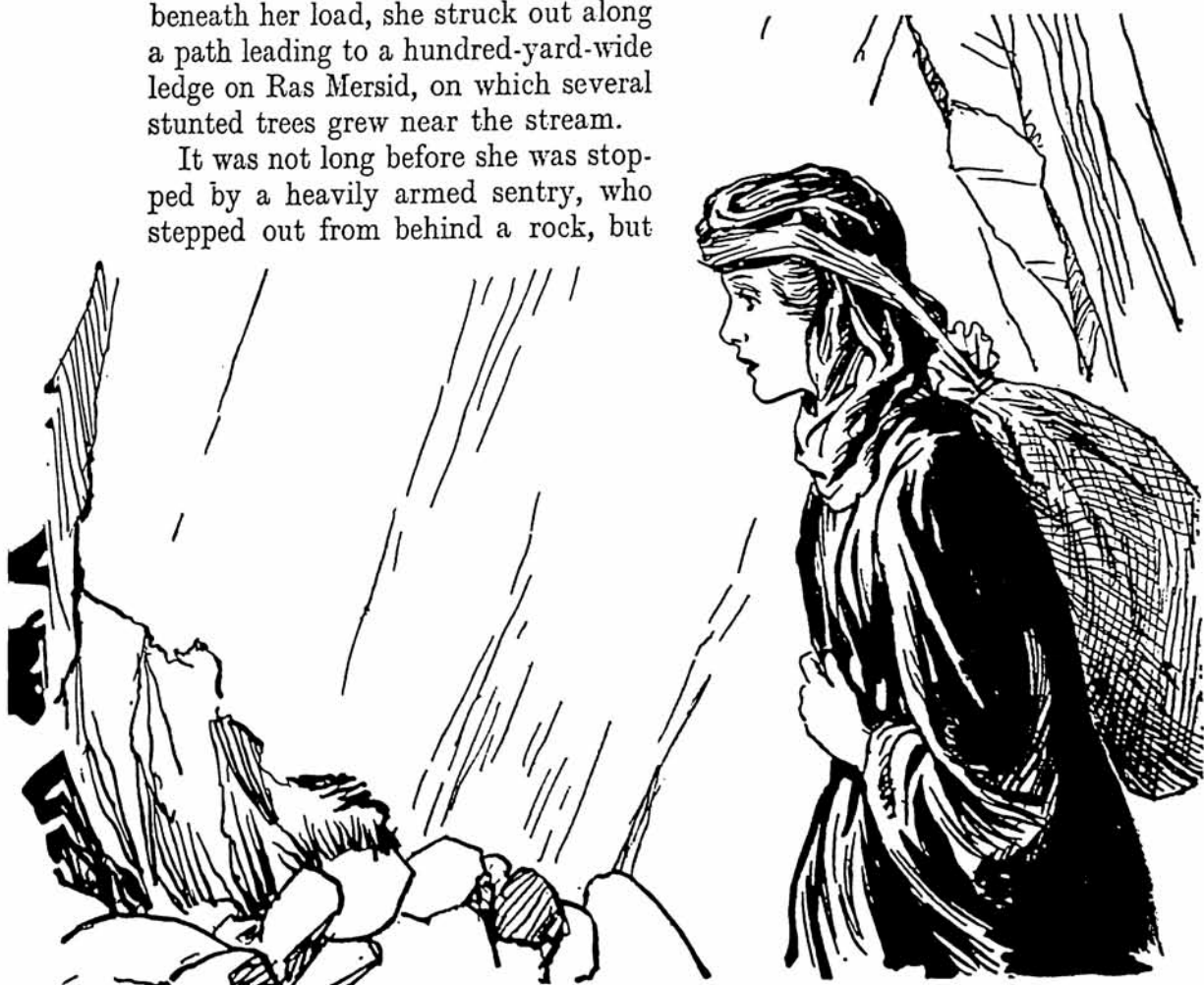
tion. She would make her way into the very centre of the cave-mouths near the waterfall on Ras Mersid, and pretend that she had come to sell charcoal. After all, the outlaws would need fuel for their cooking and they might welcome buying what she had to offer.

The little cascade showed like a silver pencil against the bare rock, its course marked by a thin line of greenery, bushes and grass maintaining a precarious existence where its moisture could reach their roots. The occupied caves, Rosalind knew, lay somewhere near the fresh water, for there was no other spring within several miles. Bent beneath her load, she struck out along a path leading to a hundred-yard-wide ledge on Ras Mersid, on which several stunted trees grew near the stream.

It was not long before she was stopped by a heavily armed sentry, who stepped out from behind a rock, but

when she said that her father, Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim of the Beni Terra-been Tribe at Nebi Musa, had sent her to offer charcoal the brute let her pass. He said surlily that they were indeed short of fuel, as the paraffin for the pressure-stoves had not been brought from headquarters. He blew a whistle, and when a second man appeared a couple of hundred yards further up the narrow track shouted to him to let the Arab girl pass.

After twenty minutes of hard walking Rosalind passed three more sentries as well as a small picket of foreign outlaws, and at last found herself on the ledge beside the waterfall. A hard-



out from a cave to meet her

faced European woman, who looked about thirty, came out from a cave-mouth to meet her, and, in bad Arabic, asked her how much she wanted for her charcoal. Rosalind stood humbly before her and replied that her father was not asking for money, but would appreciate some of the olive-oil and tinned food which he had heard the brave Brotherhood possessed. The woman seemed a little puzzled at first, but told the girl to wait while she consulted her superior officer.

Rosalind squatted herself down on her heels behind her bag of charcoal after the woman disappeared into the cave-mouth and looked out across the broad blue lake below. She almost jumped out of her skin when she heard Janet's voice, protesting angrily. Another hard-faced woman then appeared from a small cave-mouth, pushing Janet, who was still clad in her riding-breeches and grey silk shirt, in front of her.

"The orders are for you some exercise to take," the wardress snapped. "In this place the orders you will obey. If trouble you make you smacked will be. Be sensible and save trouble. Now, for one half-hour, you fresh-air and exercise will take. March!"

After another ten minutes the first woman reappeared and said that her superior officers had no food or oil to spare, but they were prepared to pay for the charcoal, and, what was more, to take as much of it as the tribe liked to send. Rosalind sat and haggled, gently but persistently, as any Beni Terra-been girl would have done in the circumstances. Finally she accepted the money she was offered and rose to go.

"I suppose there is no work in this place for a girl of the Arab?" she asked.

"I am good at cooking, and I can clean and sweep."

"Be off with you!" the woman snorted. "We want none of your filthy Arab cooking, nor any of your sand-rat ideas of filth. Begone, but come back when you have more charcoal."

"How shall we pass your sentries?" Rosalind asked. "You have many armed men on the paths, and they will shoot the men of my tribe if they come this way with your charcoal."

"Wait a moment," the woman replied, and again disappeared into the fastnesses of the rock. While she was away, the other woman snapped at the promenading Janet, telling her that her period for exercise was ended and that it was time for her to return to her cell.

Rosalind covertly watched her friend as she was taken back to a small opening in the rock and disappeared through the dark doorway. Less than two minutes later the wardress reappeared, at the same moment that the woman who was looking after the commissariat came back, with a tall and burly man dressed in khaki beside her.

The man looked at the wardress, and halted.

"Is your prisoner secure?" he demanded, in brusque military tones.

"Yes, my Leader," she replied. "I have bolted the steel door, and she is quite safe."

"Good! Remember you answer with your life for her safe custody," the man snapped, and then turned to Rosalind, speaking in German for the woman to translate into her bad Arabic.

The upshot of it all was that the Leader wanted to know if the Terra-been were willing to sell him a dozen



The wardress pushed Janel in front of her

sheep and six goats for milking? Would they be willing to send at least ten camel-loads of charcoal? Most of all he wanted to be told if the Sheikh would send a representative to talk over some important matters which might prove very profitable to his whole tribe.

"What kind of matters?" Rosalind asked the woman, for it would have been unmannerly for a simple Bedouin girl to have spoken directly to a foreign man. "My people fear the police, and would not be entangled in anything for which they could be imprisoned or shot."

The man grinned when that was translated to him. "Tell her that there may be as much as ten thousand pounds for her tribe if she can persuade her sheikh to visit me and we agree on his people becoming our allies, for we can use men who have free contact with the outside world."

"These matters are too high for me," Rosalind replied humbly, "but

I will carry your word to my father, Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim. But how can he and his men come here without being fired upon by your honour's valiant sentries?"

"The password is *The Gate of David*, spoken in Arabic," the man replied. "I will warn the sentries and pickets to allow anyone using that countersign to pass freely to this place. Let this girl ride with the first party so as to identify them."

"I will ask my father to send a few of his young men to you with their sheep and goats," Rosalind replied. "I will also ask them to come tonight so that no time may be lost. But—" and she allowed her voice to grow anxious—"perhaps they will not take much notice of my word, which is only that of a simple maiden. Give me some token to bear out what I have to say to them."

The man fumbled in his pockets, and then drew out a single orange-and-red fifty-pound note. "Take this to your

people," he said. "That is the sign they will best understand."

"And what about the payment for my charcoal?" Rosalind whined. "My father will beat me if I do not return with its price."

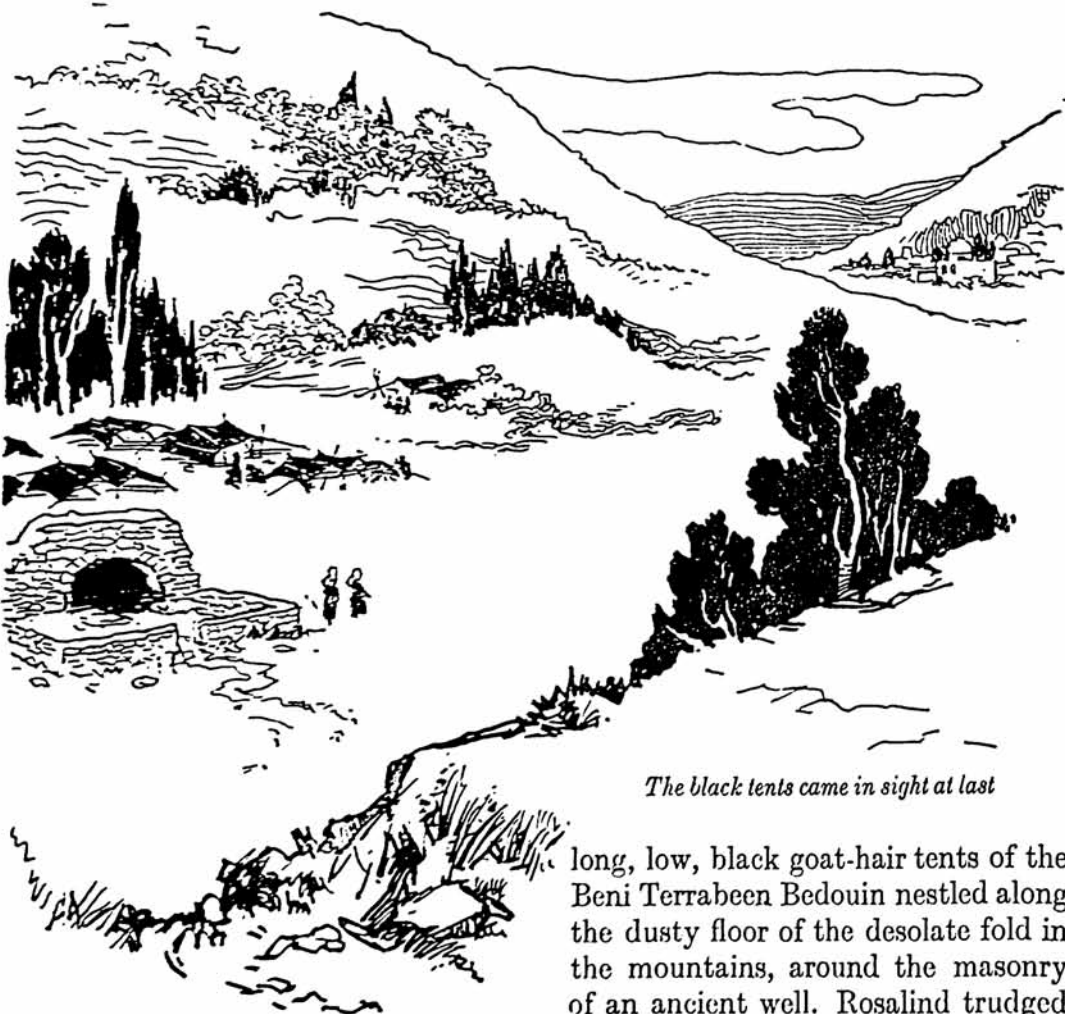
The man flushed angrily at what he thought to be her greed, but finally put it down to her stupidity and ignorance, and flung her a one-pound note and a handful of 200-mil pieces, coins very like an English florin. Then he turned and walked away.

The woman bade Rosalind refresh herself at the spring and then get about her business, as it would take

her at least three hours to reach Nebi Musa, where her tribe was encamped.

Rosalind could scarcely believe in her luck as she struck out along the rough hill tracks towards the mosque of Nebi Musa, but she never lost sight of the fact that she was still moving in the midst of the most deadly peril. Along the whole of the long trail to the camp she never swerved in the least bit from the playing of her part as a simple Bedouin girl.

The dusk was gathering when she came in sight of the white domes and sandstone walls of the big Mosque and its cluster of pilgrim-hospices. The

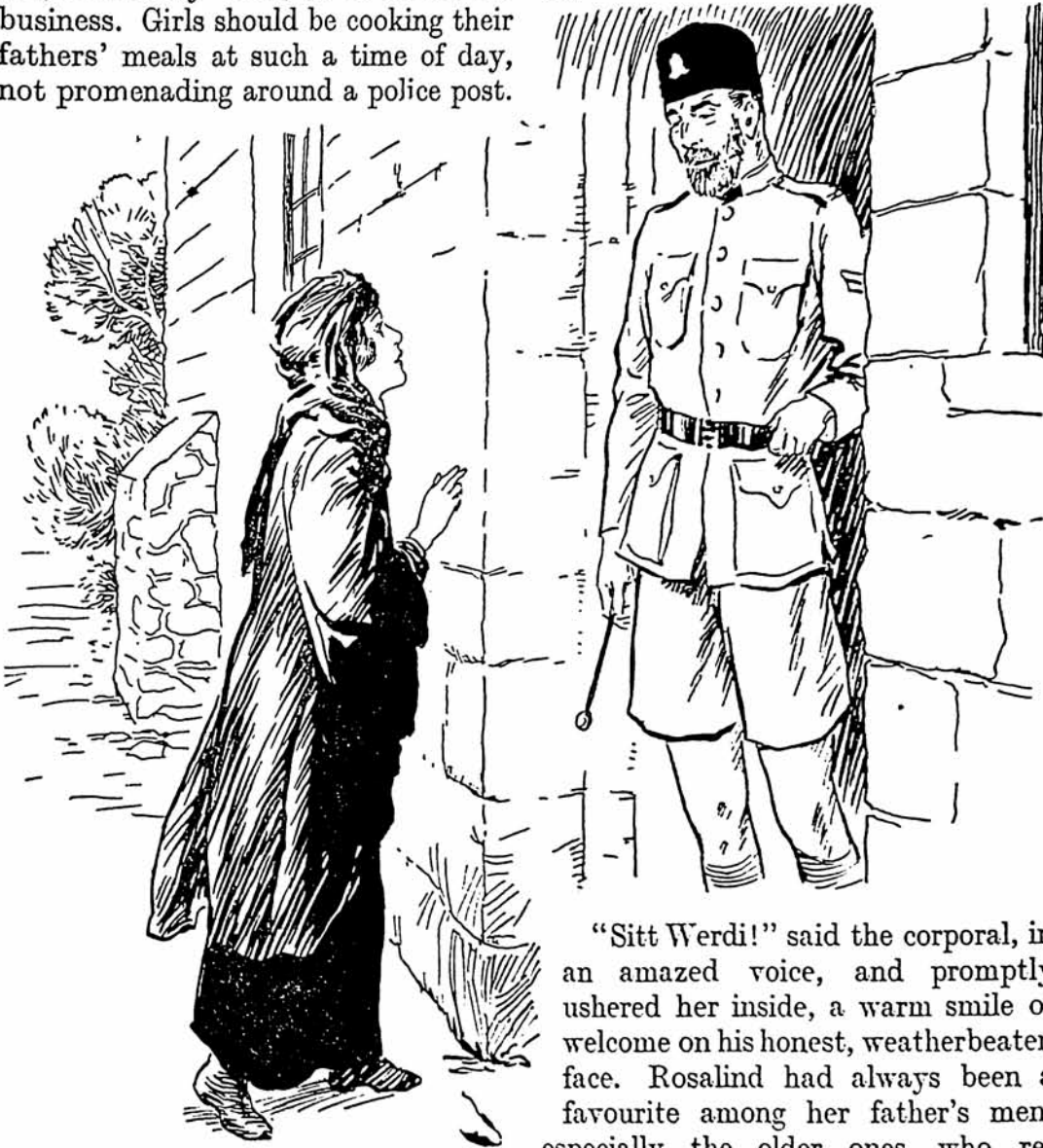


The black tents came in sight at last

long, low, black goat-hair tents of the Beni Terrabeen Bedouin nestled along the dusty floor of the desolate fold in the mountains, around the masonry of an ancient well. Rosalind trudged

forward, never abandoning her rôle of the Bedouin girl, and went to the small police outpost beyond the high buildings. The Arab corporal in the arched doorway looked up and told her, in a surly voice, to be about her business. Girls should be cooking their fathers' meals at such a time of day, not promenading around a police post.

"Do you not know my father's daughter, Corporal Hussein el Ahli?" she asked cheerfully, and smiled when she saw the man stiffen in his tracks. "Quick! Let me in! I have much to do."



"Quick! Let me in!" she said

There was no one else in sight at the moment, although she could hear the troopers moving about inside the little fortified building.

"Sitt Werdi!" said the corporal, in an amazed voice, and promptly ushered her inside, a warm smile of welcome on his honest, weatherbeaten face. Rosalind had always been a favourite among her father's men, especially the older ones, who remembered her as a baby.

A few minutes later the girl was talking to her father on the telephone, telling him all that had happened.

"I could spank you, Rossy," her father said in tones of utmost relief;

"but I must say I'm extremely proud of you. It was very brave and clever of you to find that silly girl who has caused us so much trouble. We don't seem to be any nearer recovering her, though; I can't send a patrol down there without a great chance of her being murdered before we can save her."

Rosalind spoke very fast while she outlined her plan. She suggested that a party of Palestine Police, disguised as Bedouin of the Beni Terrabeen, should start at once with the sheep, goats and charcoal. Once they were in the Brotherhood's headquarters they could get hold of Janet, and then hold out until big reinforcements could be brought up. The girl suggested that some of the airborne troops from the big camp at Sarafand-el-Amar might be glad to have a chance to practise their skill. She also said that there was a fairly good dropping-ground on the big terrace beside the waterfall.

She said that it would be dangerous to risk sending police reinforcements to Nebi Musa, as the outlaws might be watching from their eyries on the hills and would see the unusual number of cars arriving. It would be better if she started off at once with a dozen of the men already in the Outpost.

"But why should *you* go?" her father asked in a startled voice. "I can't allow that."

"I'm the only one who knows where Janet is locked up, Dad," Rosalind replied. "As soon as we strike our blow, someone will have to rush into that tunnel, for fear that those awful women may be standing guard over Janet, with orders to murder her at the first sign of trouble. I'm the only one who knows the precise place where

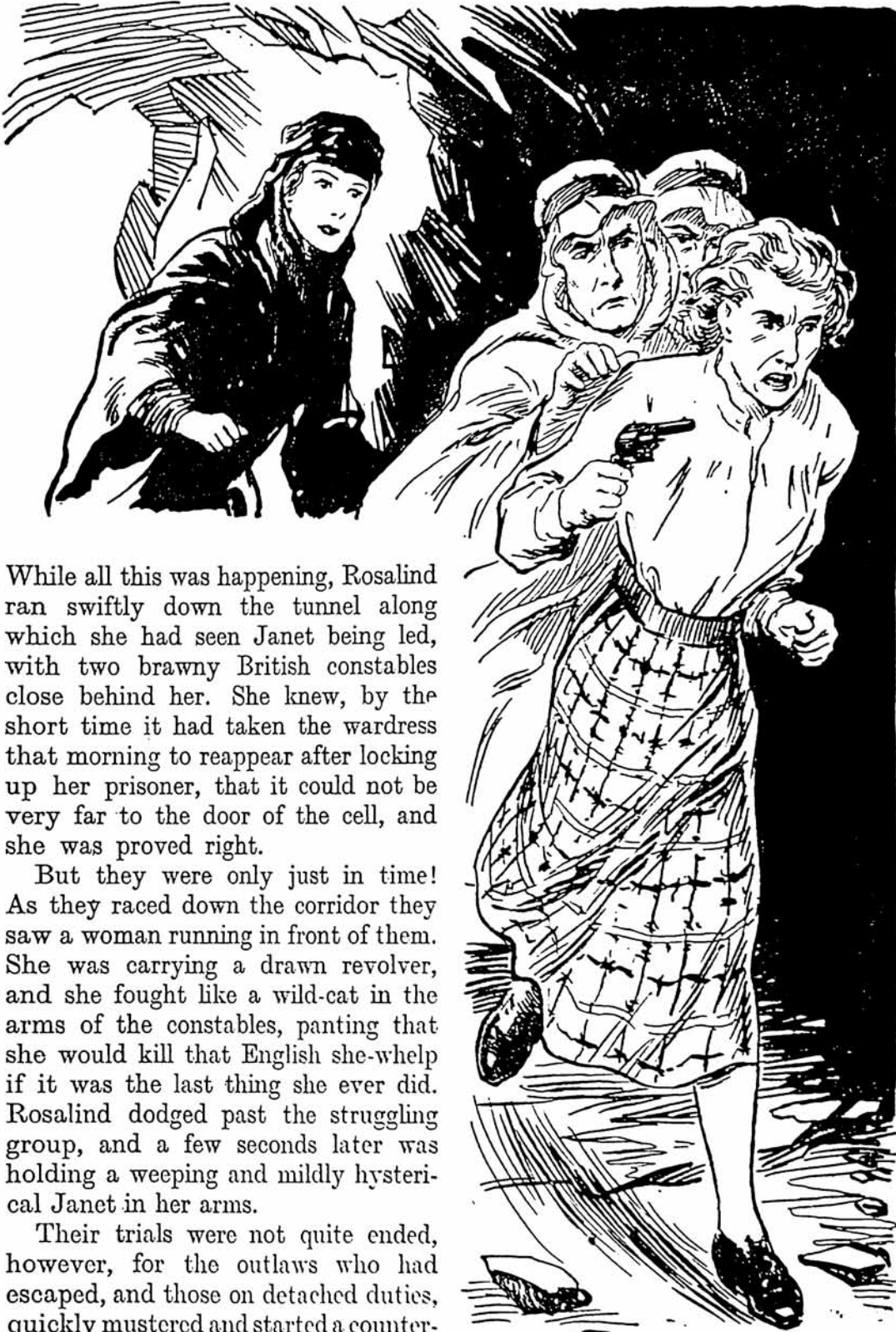
she is locked up. On top of that, the Brotherhood's sentries have been instructed to watch for the Arab girl who was commissioned to bring them their animals and fuel as an identification of the party. That's why I must go with them."

Colonel Donaldson very reluctantly agreed that his daughter would need to go, and promised that the parachutist troops would be dropped at the first gleam of the new day.

An hour later Rosalind rode out of Nebi Musa in the darkness of the early night in the midst of the disguised patrol of four British and nine Arab policemen.

It was a strange and dangerous journey, and one that Rosalind never forgot. Janet's life was at stake, and perhaps her own and those of the little band she led. But everything went like a charm. The enemy sentries allowed the little party to pass without any fuss, as soon as Rosalind spoke up and gave the password. They had been expecting her, and they saw nothing suspicious in the number of mounted Arabs, swathed in their long *abiya* mantles, each man carrying a bleating lamb across the front of his saddle, who were escorting the pack-mules of fuel.

A few minutes after midnight they came onto the broad terrace beside the plashing waterfall, and then the hardy Palestine Police troopers went into instant and vigorous action. They took full advantage of the complete surprise which they sprang. There was some firing for a few minutes, and one large party of semi-dazed outlaws had to be blasted out of an inner fastness with some well-placed hand-grenades.



While all this was happening, Rosalind ran swiftly down the tunnel along which she had seen Janet being led, with two brawny British constables close behind her. She knew, by the short time it had taken the wardress that morning to reappear after locking up her prisoner, that it could not be very far to the door of the cell, and she was proved right.

But they were only just in time! As they raced down the corridor they saw a woman running in front of them. She was carrying a drawn revolver, and she fought like a wild-cat in the arms of the constables, panting that she would kill that English she-whelp if it was the last thing she ever did. Rosalind dodged past the struggling group, and a few seconds later was holding a weeping and mildly hysterical Janet in her arms.

Their trials were not quite ended, however, for the outlaws who had escaped, and those on detached duties, quickly mustered and started a counter-attack. But Sergeant Grimleby, the

With drawn revolver, she was like a wild-cat



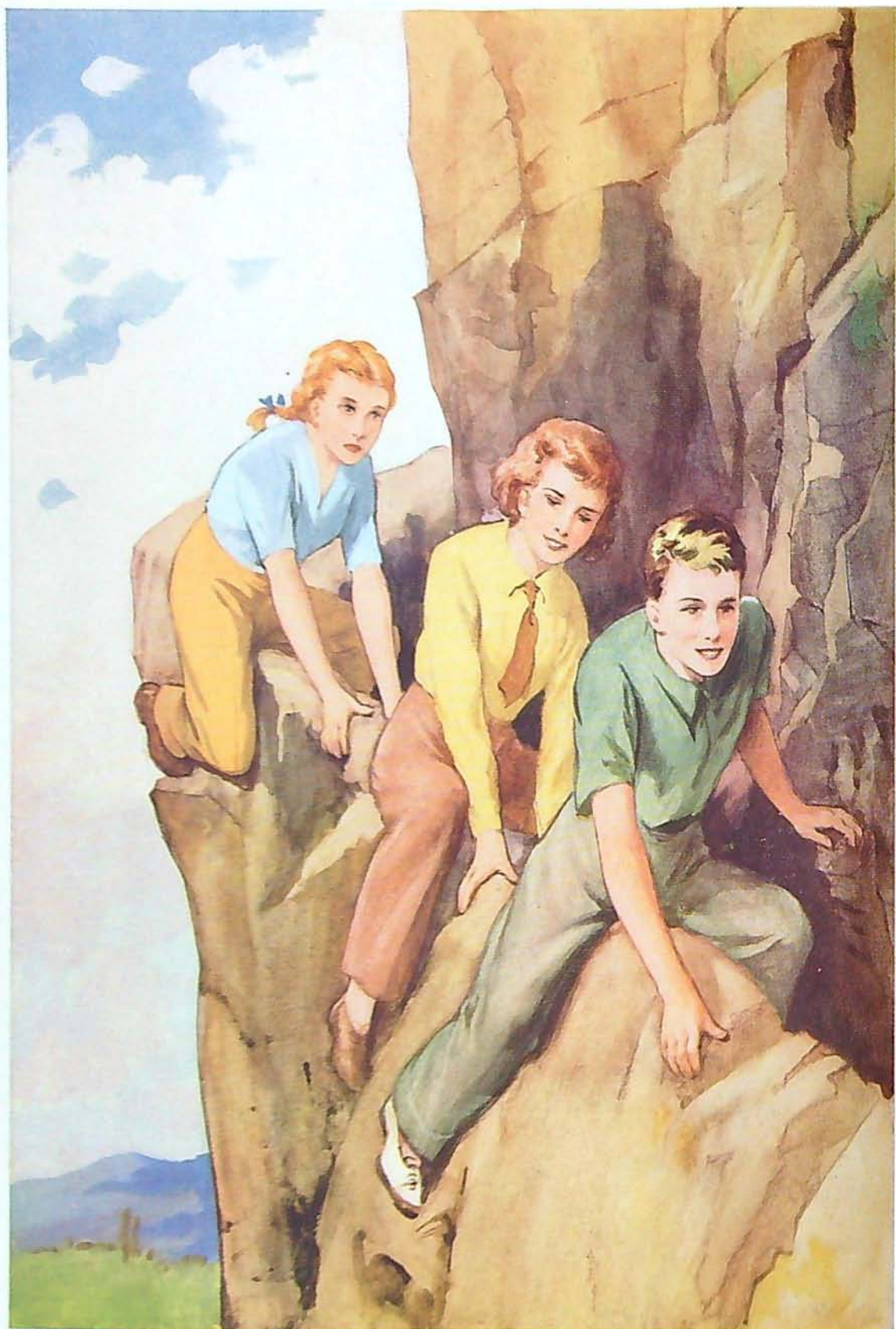
Scores of parachutes opened above the target

British Police N.C.O. in charge of the party, was a veteran of the Royal Marine Commandos, and soon organised a splendid defence. Rosalind and Janet were ordered to remain in cover, where they did their utmost to organise a first-aid post and dressing-station. Fortunately, except for two men who received slight flesh-wounds, there was no need for their services, and when two machine-guns had been brought into action and had driven back a determined attack, the enemy drew off and contented themselves with a dropping fire. They were waiting for daylight to allow themselves a better chance before they attacked again.

The dawn brought many aircraft, and from the big troop-carriers the canopies of scores of parachutes opened in the wind as airborne men dropped onto their target. Sergeant Grimleby

and his party opened an intensive fire to keep the outlaws from shooting at the men in the air, and in less than an hour it was all over. Parties of parachutists had been dropped on all the commanding points around Ain Jiddi, and, by noon, the Palestine Police and troops had wiped out or captured one of the worst gangs in the whole country.

Long before that, however, the two girls had been taken by swift motor-boat from Ain Jiddi, up the Dead Sea to Kalia, and thence to their home at the Residency. Colonel Donaldson did not say as much as a single word of reproach to Janet—his first glance at her had shown him that there was no need—she was only too conscious of what her wilfulness had done. Neither did he say much to Rosalind, but his eyes very plainly showed his pride in his plucky daughter.



MARGOT CLUNG ON. DETERMINED NOT TO SHOW HER DEEP FEAR

PERILOUS PASS

by

Mary Gervaise

Carol was singing at the top of her voice as she followed her brother David's tall, loosely built figure across the narrow pass. Margot, struggling along in the rear, envied her with all her heart. It was a lovely day—and days can be lovely in early summer on the Welsh mountains—but Margot was unaware of the blue sky and the warm smell of honey and wildflowers, and the shining river far below. She kept her eyes glued to a small darn in the back of Carol's shirt. If she once looked away from that darn, she thought, she must lose her balance and fall—roll down the steep mountain-side like one of the boulders David had dislodged just now.

"All right?" called Carol, breaking off in the middle of a bar.

"Yes, *perfectly* all right!" gasped Margot, terribly afraid that Carol would turn round and she would lose sight of that precious darn.

"We haven't much farther to go,"



said Carol lightly; "only another mile and a half. It's lucky it's a fine day and we can use the short cut. It's nearly twelve miles by road."

"Yes—it's *very* lucky!" Margot agreed, clenching her icy hands.

The pathway seemed to be getting narrower all the time, and in places it was solid rock—very slippery to unaccustomed feet. Margot's heart was thudding in terror, and her forehead was wet with perspiration. She dared not wipe it, however, because that would mean finding her handkerchief and perhaps taking her eyes off that little darn. . . .

Trudging along like this, she wondered—not for the first time in her life—why people were made so differently. Her cousin Carol was only two months older than she was, and yet she had the confidence of a grown-up person. Carol was never shy, never frightened or at a loss. She and David simply didn't know what fear meant.

Margot reflected with gratitude that no people could have been kinder than her uncle and aunt and cousins had been when they welcomed her to their home the previous autumn. Her parents had died, and she had come all the way from Australia to live with these hitherto unknown relations.

"I'll show you the horses," Carol had said, almost as soon as she arrived at the farm. "David and I are mad on riding, of course, but you'll beat us hollow, coming from Australia."

And Margot had had to confess that she had lived in the heart of Sydney, and had never so much as offered an apple to a horse in her life!

They had been very patient with her, and had gradually introduced her to country ways, and if Carol laughed at

the sight of Margot running away from an amiable cow in the belief that it was a ferocious bull she had been very nice about it afterwards.

"You'll soon get used to things," she had said.

David had taught her to ride Myrtle, the oldest and most staid of the Trevors' horses, and somehow Margot had managed to stick on, and even smile, instead of crying out as she wanted to: "Leave me alone! *Please* leave me alone, and don't try to make me do things. Can't you see I'm scared to death?"

She and Carol went as weekly boarders to a school in Denbigh, and that was all right; Margot could hold her own there, because her shyness was considered quite proper for a new girl, and of course there weren't any dangerous things to do. True, her heart used to fail her sometimes in gym; but rope-climbing and "storming" lost half their terror for her because she knew that Miss Hughes, the P.T. mistress, was close at hand.

But here, on this awful mountain-pass, there was no Miss Hughes with her encouraging voice and no nice thick mat to break one's fall. There was nothing in the world, thought poor Margot, except the vast sky above and the frightful drop below—and that neat little darn on Carol's back!

David was calling something.

"Look out—we're coming to a sticky bit!"

Margot caught her breath. Was there worse to come? There was! The rough path seemed to fall away to nothing, and in a kind of sick stupor she saw the other two straddling their way across a razor's edge of rock.

"O.K.?" asked Carol cheerfully.



Mrs. Griffiths waved to them from the farmhouse door

"Oh, rather!" said Margot, with a horrible heartiness that jarred on her own ears.

She set her teeth and clung on. She would *not* give in before David and Carol. She liked them both so much, and they liked her—but they wouldn't if they knew she was a coward.

Now there was a yawning gap, and Carol waited for her. Carol was big and strong for her thirteen years, but Margot was of a much frailer build, and looked what she was—city-bred.

"Like a paw?" said Carol, extending a square, sunburnt one as she spoke.

She had turned round, so that the darn was no longer visible. Margot longed to clutch that strong hand, but pride would not allow it.

"No, thanks; I'm all right," she said brightly; but her wide eyes saw nothing but the thin line of rock, and so she missed her cousin's swift, approving smile.

"Only another ten minutes or so, and we'll be at Bryn-y-Gwynt," said Carol,

"and Mrs. Griffiths 'll give us a simply wizard tea. She always does. You'll like them. We'd have taken you there before, only they've been so busy. Nigel's had to work like a nigger."

Margot heard herself making some suitable reply. Nigel Griffiths, she knew, was running the farm of Bryn-y-Gwynt since his father died, and it was not very easy for him, as he had an artificial leg. He had been in the R.A.F. and had won the D.F.C. He was, she knew, quite a local hero. What would *he* think of a girl who mistook cows for bulls, and couldn't bear heights?

"Shall we push on?" asked David, several yards ahead. "I don't know about you two, but I'm starving!"

Margot gave a sickly smile—she felt as if she would never touch food again! Then Carol began to follow her brother, and Margot fixed her eyes on the darn again. After a few more minutes of sheer horror the path broadened and began to wind downwards, and suddenly it was a smooth

green lane leading to a pretty white farmhouse.

Mrs. Griffiths was waiting for them, and with her was a small curly-headed boy of three or four—Nigel's little brother, as Margot remembered hearing. She realised that she was not the only shy person in the world, for Ivor—that was his name—gave the three newcomers one look and promptly vanished.

"You must excuse him," laughed Mrs. Griffiths. "He's rather upset to-day. Nigel had to punish him this morning for climbing on the roof of the black barn. The tiles are getting loose, and we've got all the machinery stored in there at the moment, so a fall would be terribly—What is it, my dear? Are you faint?"

Margot had turned so white at the word "fall" that they were all concerned, and in spite of her protestations she was taken indoors at once and put to lie on a sofa. She felt that she had disgraced her cousins as well as herself, and was very nearly in tears when someone tapped on the door.

"Come in," she whispered.

In came a tall young man, dark and bronzed, and walking with a limp. This must be Nigel. He was carrying a glass of milk.

"Mother was going to bring you this," he said gently, "but she's taking her scones out of the oven, so I said I would see that you drank it. It's warm."

"I can't," said Margot.

She looked at him, her blue eyes enormous in her small white face. His brown eyes regarded her steadily, and all at once she forgot that he was a hero, and thought instead that here was somebody who would understand.

"I'm not faint," she said. "Your mother and my cousins thought so, and I let them. But the truth is, I—I'm frightened. I'm a coward, and I hate myself—and all the warm milk in the world won't cure that!"

Nigel Griffiths set the glass down, and sat on a chair by the sofa.

"Tell me what frightened you," he said quietly.

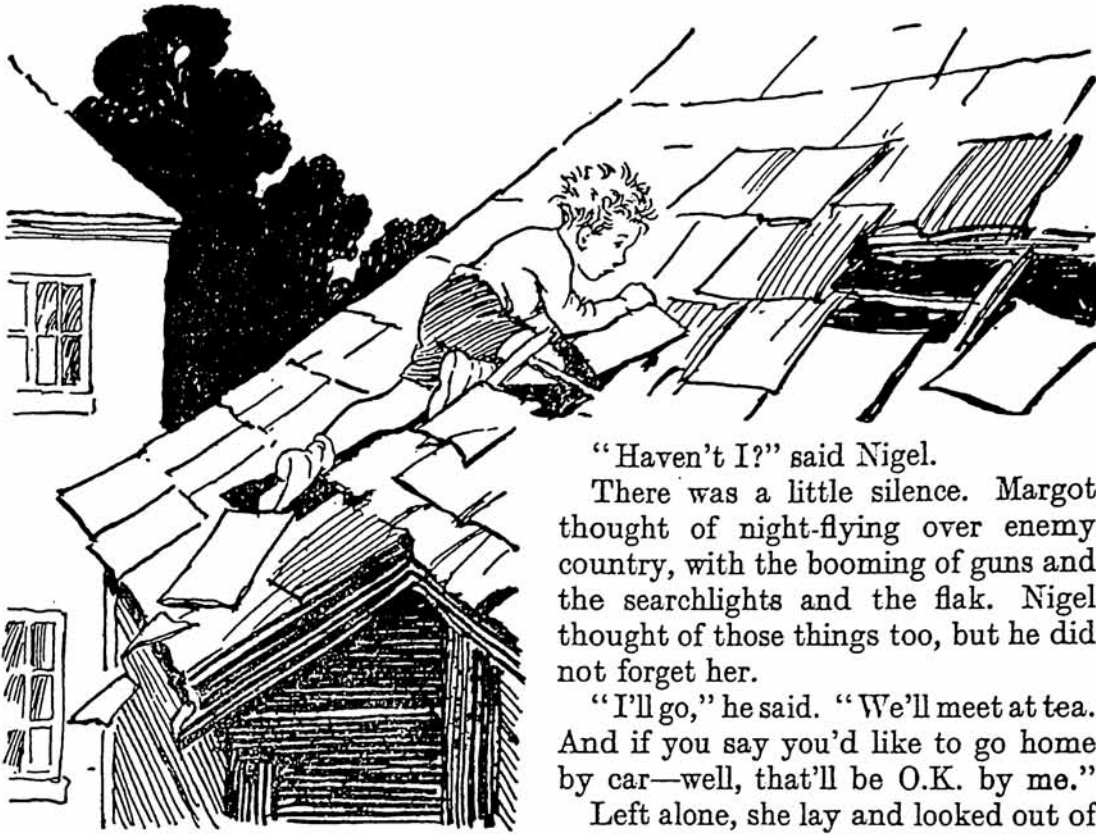
So Margot told him about the kind, friendly cow from whom she had so ignominiously fled, and her rides on Myrtle, and all the other things that had culminated in that nightmare on the mountain. He listened intently without saying a word.

"And we've got to go back," said Margot, when she reached the end of her tale. "It's twelve miles by road, so we've got to use the short cut—and I can't do it all over again. I can't—and I must!"

"Well," he remarked, "I could drive



She raced towards the barn



"I'm stuck!" screamed Ivor

you home, you know. We could do that quite easily without anyone guessing how you feel about the mountain. I'll certainly do it if you'd like me to."

"You will? Oh, thank you!" she cried, some colour coming back to her cheeks. Then something in his answering smile puzzled her, and she frowned. "What do you mean—'if I'd like you to'? I've just been telling you—"

"You've been telling me how unhappy these fears make you. I'm just wondering if going home in the car is going to make it easier next time—because there will be a next time, you know. There always is."

Margot bit her lip. "You wouldn't understand," she said. "You've never been afraid——"

"Haven't I?" said Nigel.

There was a little silence. Margot thought of night-flying over enemy country, with the booming of guns and the searchlights and the flak. Nigel thought of those things too, but he did not forget her.

"I'll go," he said. "We'll meet at tea. And if you say you'd like to go home by car—well, that'll be O.K. by me."

Left alone, she lay and looked out of the french windows. She could see the pretty, well-kept garden and the farm buildings beyond. That tall, ramshackle place must be the black barn, she reflected—and even as she glanced at it she saw Ivor's small, determined figure climbing on to the roof. She sat up, wondering whether to call his mother, and then she saw him slip, as one foot sank into the rotten roof.

Margot was not as lithe as Carol, but she was just as swift. She was through those french windows in a flash, and racing towards the black barn. She saw how the child had climbed up—some of the boards were missing, revealing the framework, which made a series of footholds.

"Oh, I'm stuck! I'm stuck! And it's cracking!" screamed Ivor.

"I'll get you down," said Margot, and began the ascent.

She had to move very carefully on the roof, in case it would not bear her weight, but somehow she managed to crawl towards the child. He turned and tried to come to meet her—and then a large piece of the roof gave way, and a second later he was dangling from a rough splinter that had caught in his sleeve.

Margot Trevor never forgot that moment. There was a yawning gap between her and the child who was in such deadly danger, for the splinter would certainly give way—and down below she could see the gleaming steel teeth and blades of the brightly painted farm implements. One beam still held firm—a sort of backbone to the roof. If she could keep her balance and crawl along that, she might just reach him in time.

She was quite unaware that she had called for help. Her wits seemed to be numb. All she knew was that Ivor should not fall to his death if she could possibly save him—and so she crept across that old beam, and caught him firmly by the shoulder.

"Don't move," she said. "You're all right—I've got you—"

"Don't *you* move, either, Margot," said a quiet voice down below. "They're bringing a ladder, and we'll have you both down in no time."

"Nigel!" said Margot faintly.

She felt better now that he was there, but Ivor was growing heavier every moment, and the beam was beginning to creak.

And then David and a farm-hand came running with a ladder. Nigel steadied it—for when it came to ladder-climbing he couldn't pretend that his new leg was as good as the old one—and David swarmed up and crept cautiously towards Margot.

"Can you hang on while I take the kid?" he asked jerkily.

"Of course!" she said, and even freed one hand to help him loosen the splinter. Then she waited, crouching on the beam for what seemed like a hundred years till David came back, and slowly but surely guided her to the top of the ladder.

Carol was standing beside Nigel by this time—a Carol whose face was so white that all the freckles stood out like—like grapenuts, thought Margot wildly, and managed to grin.

"Lucky you saw him!" said Carol casually.

"I'll say it was!" agreed David.

Margot glowed. They were proud of her; they were glad; but they were *not* surprised, and that pleased her more than anything, except perhaps the quick look Nigel gave her as he uttered a brief, "Thanks, Margot."

"Tea, people!" Mrs. Griffiths called from the house, and the anticlimax made them all laugh. Ivor chuckled, too, thinking that he must have done something rather wonderful. But his brother soon dispelled that idea.

Mrs. Griffiths didn't say much when Nigel told her what had happened, for that was not her way. But Margot knew that she had made some friends for life, and, strangely enough, she was able to eat an enormous tea.

"Well," said Nigel easily, at the end of the meal, "do you three feel like walking home, or shall I get the car out?"

Margot's heart turned a somersault, and Carol looked at her.

"David and I'd rather go back across the mountain," she said, "because it's such a lovely evening. But what about you, Margot? You must be tired."



"Can you hang on while I take the kid?" asked David

"Well, I——" Across the table Margot caught Nigel's eye, and smiled at him. "I'd like to go home with the others, please, but thank you for suggesting driving us."

"Sure?" he asked.

She nodded. Yes, she *was* sure now—sure that her nerve wouldn't fail her when there was something important to be done. She suddenly felt so happy that she wanted to sing.

"Quite certain, thank you! I'm looking forward to the walk home," she declared.

"Well!" said Mrs. Griffiths, in pretended indignation. "We're not used to our guests saying that to our faces!" And, as Margot joined in the laugh against herself, she added: "All right, we'll forgive you this time, if you'll all come to Ivor's birthday party next week."

So that was settled, and presently three very cheerful people set off for home. Nigel came to the gate to see them on their way, and the curly head of the banished Ivor popped out of his bedroom window. Dolefully he waved a chubby hand.

"He won't be shy of you—next time," said Nigel, underlining the last two words, looking down at Margot. "Well, so long, and—thank you."

"I think it's the other way round," said Margot.

"What are you two burbling about?" asked David; but he didn't expect an answer, and he didn't get one.

"You know, Margot," said Carol, as they took the mountain-path, "I always had a sort of idea—because you've lived in a town, I suppose—that you weren't too keen on heights. But, my hat, it was lucky for young Ivor that you've got such a steady head!"

A steady head! A big reputation to live up to, thought Margot—but she *would* live up to it. Some time she would tell Carol all about to-day; but not yet.

David was leading again, and presently he began to sing. Was it by chance that he chose an old and well-worn song?

"She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes!

Coming round the MOUNTAIN when she comes—

She'll be coming round the mountain——"

Carol had taken it up now, and Margot, who had hitherto been much too shy to sing with them, joined in.

So they walked home across the pass, their happy voices rising and falling in the golden evening air.



CRUISE OF THE "CAKEWALK"

"Aren't they beauties? Gosh! Three-speed, and everything!" Jeremy Maynard pressed closer to the shop window.

"They're gorgeous!" his twin sister Jean enthused.

Then they both sighed suddenly, and, turning away from the allurements of the big cycle-shop, they wandered on down the road.

"We'd save such a lot in bus fares that it would really be econom—an economy if we had a bike each," said Jerry, frowning fiercely.

"I know. And think of the fun we'd get, too!"

The twins were silent for a moment, visualising the splendid fun to be achieved by possessing a brand-new, shining bicycle.

"Oh, what's the good of thinking about it?" Jerry kicked aimlessly at a stone. "We can't ask Dad to spend all that money when he's so hard-up."

"I suppose not!" Jean sounded rueful. "He did say he would buy us a

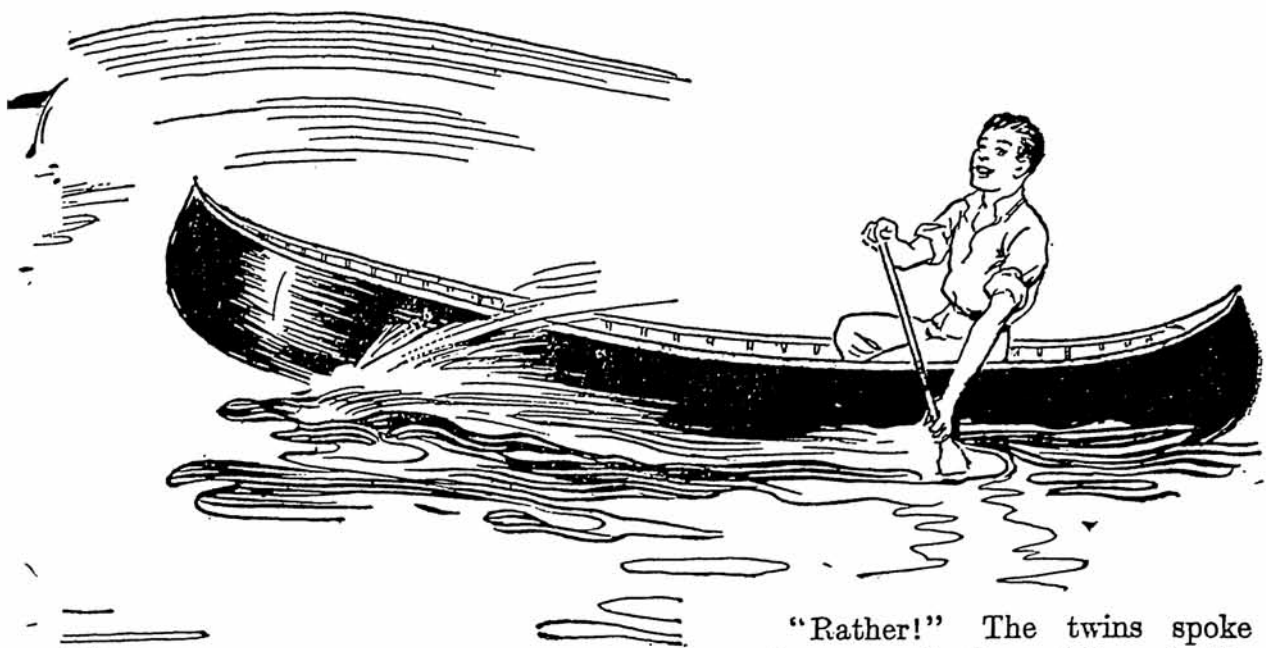
by Olive L. Groom

bike each this year, but what with the pea-crop failing and the fruit all spoilt by that wretched gale last week it wouldn't be fair to ask him now. Oh, look, Jerry! There's the poster about the Regatta. Come on; let's see what's on!"

Abandoning their longing thoughts of those exciting machines in the shop-window, the pair paused to gaze at the large poster on the Guildhall wall.

In bright red lettering the placard announced the forthcoming 'Daneford Regatta and Water Carnival', with, among other attractions, a pageant of decorated boats, for the best one of which was a prize of fifty pounds.

"I wish *we* could enter for the Regatta prize—we'd be able to buy our bikes then without worrying Dad," Jeremy said after a while.



"We haven't got a boat," Jean answered flatly, and that seemed the end of that hope.

"Hullo, you two! Thinking of entering for the prize?"

The twins swung round, and saw Vernon Leigh, son of a local J.P., swaggering up to them. Vernon's father was quite one of the wealthiest men in the neighbourhood, and, in consequence, his son was inclined to swank and brag. He was always very condescending when talking to other youngsters. No one minded Vernon much, for all his snobbish ways. More than one village boy had given him a 'licking' in the past, and, as Jerry once remarked, "He won't be such a bad fellow when we've knocked some sense into him."

"Why, are *you* going in for it, then?" Jean asked now. "I didn't know you had a boat."

"I have, though—a canoe. Dad gave her to me for my birthday. She's a beauty! Like to see her?"

"Rather!" The twins spoke in chorus, and they followed Vernon eagerly along the river-path until they came to the private landing-stage, where a sleek, brown, shiny canoe floated gracefully on the water.

Vernon sprang into the boat, anxious to show off his new treasure. With swift-flashing paddles, a few deft strokes, and the canoe glided smoothly downstream, turned, and was brought back to the landing-stage with a flourish.

"How's that?" Vernon's usually superior smile had become a wide grin.

"Grand! Simply smashing!" Jerry said sincerely.

Vernon nodded. "She's great!" he agreed, with immense satisfaction. "Wait until you see her at the Regatta! That prize is as good as won already! So-long, twins!"

He turned the canoe downstream again and disappeared round a bend in the river.

"Sometimes," said Jean fervently, "I feel I'd like to show him that he's not 'monarch of all he surveys' round here!"

"Me, too!" her brother agreed. "He doesn't need that prize-money as we do."

"Still, he couldn't know that, I suppose," Jean admitted honestly as they walked on.

The twins strolled homeward along the towpath, watching and admiring the small craft that were to be seen all along the river, each boat trim and polished in readiness for the grand Water Carnival.

"If only we could hire a boat we could enter for the prize," Jerry said, struck by a sudden idea. "It doesn't have to be your own boat as long as you decorate it yourself."

"That's a good idea!" Jean's face brightened at once. "Come on! Let's go down to old Crane's boatslip now. Oh, I forgot! He'll want some money, of course. How much have you?"

Jeremy promptly turned out his pockets, and produced a jumble of string, screws, fish-hooks and bus-tickets.

"The junk you boys carry in your pockets!" laughed Jean.

"It's nothing compared with the stuff you girls cram into your silly handbags!" her brother retorted, finally fishing out a shilling, a sixpence, and two or three coppers. "Here you are—one and eleven. That's the best I can do—an' some of that's my fare-money!"

"We'll manage," Jean said confidently. "Crane only charges two shillings an hour, and we'll only want it for about two. I've got just half-a-crown. We'll both have to walk to school for the rest of the week, but it will be worth it! Come on!"

Rapidly the pair sprinted along the path and round the bend to where, in a quiet backwater, old Bill Crane had his boathouse and the various punts, skiffs, and rowing-boats which he hired out

for his living. When he heard the twins' breathless request, he took his blackened pipe from between pursed lips and slowly shook his head.

"I'd be right glad to oblige you, Master Jerry, and wouldn't charge a penny for it, but I haven't a boat left. Everyone in the district wants a boat for Saturday, seemingly, and mine were all booked up by last night."

"Oh, Mr. Crane!" Jean was so disappointed that she could have cried. Jeremy looked grim.

"Is there anyone else we could hire a boat from, Mr. Crane?" he asked desperately. "We always come to you—but we *do* want one for the Regatta."

The boatman eyed them reflectively. They were a nice couple, and he respected their father very much. He knew that all the local craft were already booked, but he wanted to help Mr. Maynard's twins if he could.

"Tell you what," he said after a minute; "I'll go and phone to a friend of mine down-river. He's the only one who might have one left. Wait here, will you?"

They waited gladly, thanking him for his kindness. Then their hearts sank again. They could see by the expression on his weather-beaten face as he returned that he had failed.

"There's not a boat to be had on the river, Master Jerry. I do believe they'd hire out the old 'Cakewalk' if she'd float!" The boatman jerked the stem of his pipe in the direction of an ancient, battered hulk, a small launch, that had lain stranded in the backwater for as long as the twins could remember. All the children in the neighbourhood had played on, in, and around the damaged craft, and, since it rocked and wobbled with every step upon it, its original

name, *Cassiopeia*, had become simply *The Cakewalk*.

Jerry glanced across at it now, frowning thoughtfully.

"Could we make her float, Mr. Crane? There's no engine, I know, but she'd only have to drift down-river with the tide for a little way—the competition we want to enter isn't a race. One oar would keep her straight enough."

"She's in a bad state," said Mr. Crane, shaking his head, "half-full of stones and dirt, and with holes everywhere. Besides, isn't the Regatta Prize given for the best looking craft? You can't call the old *Cakewalk* an oil-painting, now, can you?"

"It's for the best decorated boat," Jean said eagerly. "I'm sure we could hide up all the poor old *Cakewalk's* defects if only we could make her float."

"May we use her—if we can float her, Mr. Crane?" Jerry asked anxiously.

Mr. Crane hesitated, then nodded.

"If you can make that boat fit for

the Regatta Prize I'll give her to you for good," he said, with emphasis. "No, don't thank me—you don't know whether you will succeed yet. Mind you, I don't think you can do it, but good luck, all the same!"

With a cheery grin he cut short their eager thanks and walked off to his boathouse.

For the next few days the twins were very busy. Directly school and homework were over for the day, the energetic pair were to be found working on the *Cakewalk*. By the time the fading light indicated supper and bed, both Jerry and Jean were stiff and aching from their unaccustomed hard work. Shovel and dig as they might, the semi-solid mass of rubbish and stones in the shell of the boat seemed to stay as thick as ever.

"We'll never do it in time," Jean groaned on the Wednesday, nursing her work-worn hands.

"We must do it! Think of what that



"The boat's in a bad state," said Mr. Crane

prize would mean if we won it! Bikes for us, and less fares for Dad to pay out—we could run stuff into market for him on them—the cut flowers, anyway.”

Forgetful of aching shoulders and arms, the twins redoubled their efforts.

“You’ll never get one now, I’m afraid. Mind you come and watch me win the prize.”

The twins said nothing more, but their eyes were twinkling merrily, too, though Vernon did not stop to notice. Surprising things were happening in the



‘Hello! Taking up gardening for a change?’ queried Vernon

At long last, Jerry gave a grunt of satisfaction.

“There! That’s the last load of rubbish out!” He waved his shovel triumphantly. With renewed energy and enthusiasm, the two set about righting the boat, now freed from its load of weathered deposit.

They met Vernon only once or twice during the days before the Regatta, and each time he was cheerfully confident. In a superior sort of way, too, he was sympathetic.

“Got a boat yet?” he inquired politely, his eyes twinkling.

The twins appeared to be cautious.

“We’re not sure yet,” Jeremy said, and Vernon smiled as he strolled away.

quiet backwater where the old *Cakewalk* lay.

Jeremy was becoming deeply involved with wood tar, and held long conversations with Mr. Crane and his foreman in which highly technical terms were used. Jerry’s task was to make the *Cakewalk* watertight enough to make the short trip downstream; Jean’s job was to decorate the small craft.

No one apart from Mr. Crane knew of their activities, least of all Vernon Leigh, and the J.P.’s son was convinced that the twins had given up all idea of entering for the prize. On the night before the Regatta he met Jean, who was carrying an enormous bouquet of flowers, as much as her arms could encircle.

"Hullo! Taking up gardening, for a change?" queried Vernon. "Much better than boating without a boat!" He burst into a roar of laughter at his own wit.

"It's a pleasant occupation," Jean answered demurely, taking care not to smile, and walked on.

II

Gay laughter, gently splashing water, cool green trees bending to make soft shadows on the sunlit river wavelets: the Regatta was in full swing.

The towpath was thronged with spectators, the river itself a colourful picture as brightly painted craft moved to and fro, taking up their positions for the various racing events, their brass-work flashing brilliantly in the sunlight.

But Jerry and Jean were not among the happy crowd on the towpath.

Early that morning Mr. Maynard had come back from the fields just as the twins were finishing their breakfast.

"Twins, I want you to do something for me. The boy hasn't turned up this morning, and I can't spare the time myself, so I want you to take two boxes of mushrooms to the market for me. Catch the nine o'clock bus."

"But, Dad, what about the Regatta?" they protested, their hearts sinking.

"You'll be able to catch the ten o'clock bus back," their father assured them. "You will only miss a few of the first races. I'd take the van and go myself if I weren't so busy. Run along, now!"

Willingly they clattered off on their errand. How slow that bus journey seemed! As they guarded their boxes of valuable produce and gazed at the flying countryside, they saw in imagina-

tion the great procession of boats starting without them.

"I hope they don't keep us long at the market," Jean worried. "They—oh, what's that?"

"That," said Jerry in resigned tones, "is the engine—it's broken down!"

For nearly three-quarters of an hour they fidgeted and fumed while a perspiring driver and conductor struggled with the obstinate engine. No other buses ran that way, and it was too far to walk into town, so there was nothing to do but wait.

"First breakdown in ten years!" the conductor announced apologetically, as the bus finally consented to travel again.

"Yes—and it has to happen today!" groaned the twins.

It was just after ten o'clock when Jerry and Jean entered the market, and five minutes later they were out in the street again.

"We've missed the bus now, and if we wait for the eleven o'clock one we'll be too late!" Jean wailed.

"It's goodbye to our chances of having bikes," Jerry said glumly. "After all that work, too."

"Bikes!" Jean whirled round and caught him by the hand. "That's it—bikes! Come on! That shop hires out secondhand bikes! We'll get to the Regatta yet!"

Like whirlwinds they dashed to the cycle-shop. Breathlessly they explained their needs. Then followed a hurried counting of pocket-money.

"All but a shilling!" Jerry exclaimed. He turned pleading eyes to the shopman. "Please, could we bring it when we return the cycles, sir?"

The man smiled.

"All right, son—and mind you win that prize!"

With hasty thanks they dashed off, pedalling away as if for their very lives.

"Have to take the short cut—over the level-crossing," called Jerry, and once out of the town they swung off to the right.

"The gates are closing!" gasped Jean as they crested the long slope which led down to the railway crossing.

Slowly the big gates were beginning to swing in to bar the railway against traffic while the coast express passed.



The big gates began to swing in

good bikes for us," thought Jerry. "Some of the old creaks they hire out wouldn't stand this speed without falling to pieces!"

At long last, the line of trees that marked the river-bank came into view. Soon the twins could see the splashes of colour which represented the gaily clad spectators on the towpath. They jumped off their cycles and went forward anxiously to find out whether they were yet in time. Jerry was not long in learning the answer to that question.

"Come on, Jean; they're just starting the pageant!"

Hurriedly the twins scrambled out of the crowd and ran swiftly to the backwater. The procession of boats was already beginning to drift downstream, past the launch where the three judges sat watching critically.

Craft of every kind went by: skiffs gay with flags and bunting, punts artistically draped with strings of coloured lanterns, boats outlined with electric fairy-lights, canoes disguised as

Could they do it in time? Pushing with all their energy on the pedals, the twins whizzed towards the gates, nearer and nearer. There was still a gap.

"Done it!" yelled Jerry.

They were through! With barely a second to spare, they shot over the level-crossing before the farther gates closed against them.

On they sped, seeing only the long white road ahead.

"If we have a puncture now we're finished," thought Jean, but thrust the awful notion swiftly from her.

"A good thing that shop-man chose

Viking ships, a miniature battle-cruiser, a spanish galleon, and, among them, Vernon Leigh's canoe, painted with weird symbols, with himself resplendent in full Red Indian dress.

Slowly they all glided down-river, and then, suddenly, a little ripple of amazement moved the watching crowd. Last of all in the procession floated a boat of flowers. Invisibly fastened to a network of fine wire, flowers of every shape, size, and hue covered the entire boat right down to the waterline, where feathery ferns trailed in the clear river.

A burst of handclapping, and then cheer after cheer, echoed along the banks.

"Bravo! Well done!"

"Beautiful!"

"Look at the Flower Boat!"

Jean and Jerry, half-hidden by the flower-strewn netting that covered the deck, grinned at the sound.

"She looks good—thanks to you," Jerry said generously.

"She floats—thanks to *you*," his sister retorted, smiling.

Five minutes later, as the boats drew in to the bank, the judges gave their verdict.

Jean gripped Jerry's hand hard as they watched the judges' spokesman stand up and put a megaphone to his lips.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have much pleasure in announcing that the Regatta prize of fifty pounds for the best-decorated craft goes by unanimous decision to Master and Miss Maynard of the Flower Boat!"

Red-cheeked with excitement, the twins went aboard the launch to receive their well-earned cheque, half-dazed with delight and excitement.

Vernon, still in his Indian garb, was waiting for them on the river bank.

"Congrats!" he said generously. "You certainly fooled me into thinking you hadn't got a boat." Then his curiosity got the better of him. "Where *did* you get that craft from? I know old Crane hadn't a boat left last Monday—nor had anyone else."

"Mr. Crane did have one left," Jean said, her eyes twinkling.

"But he hasn't got a small launch like that," protested Vernon. "He only hires out skiffs and things like that—he doesn't even use a craft of that size himself!"

"Think again, Vernon!" Jerry said, with a grin.

Slowly comprehension dawned, and a look of incredulity came into Vernon's face.

"Not—not—you don't mean—the *Cakewalk*?"

"Right first time!"

"Beaten by the *Cakewalk*! Well, I'm jiggered!"

Vernon, despite his 'swank', was a sportsman, and he took his defeat like a man. "You deserved to win," he said—"dashed if you didn't!"

When he had gone, Jerry looked at Jean.

"Bikes!" he said, and with one accord they dashed home with their thrilling news.



CARAVAN TO THE CAPE

by

Bertha Leonard

The four Chesters had spent nearly an hour looking over the caravan they hoped to buy. They had dodged in and out of it, walked round and round it, argued over its appearance, its road-worthiness, and its price. Now they stood in a knot, taking one last look at it from the gate of the meadow in which it stood.

"No call to be in a hurry about deciding," the owner said. "Take your time!"

The Chesters did so.

"Well? Do we buy?" Jerry asked his sisters.

The three girls dragged their gaze at last from the van to the boy, and each gave him a solemn nod. One didn't buy a caravan every day, and this was costing the four some hard-saved cash.

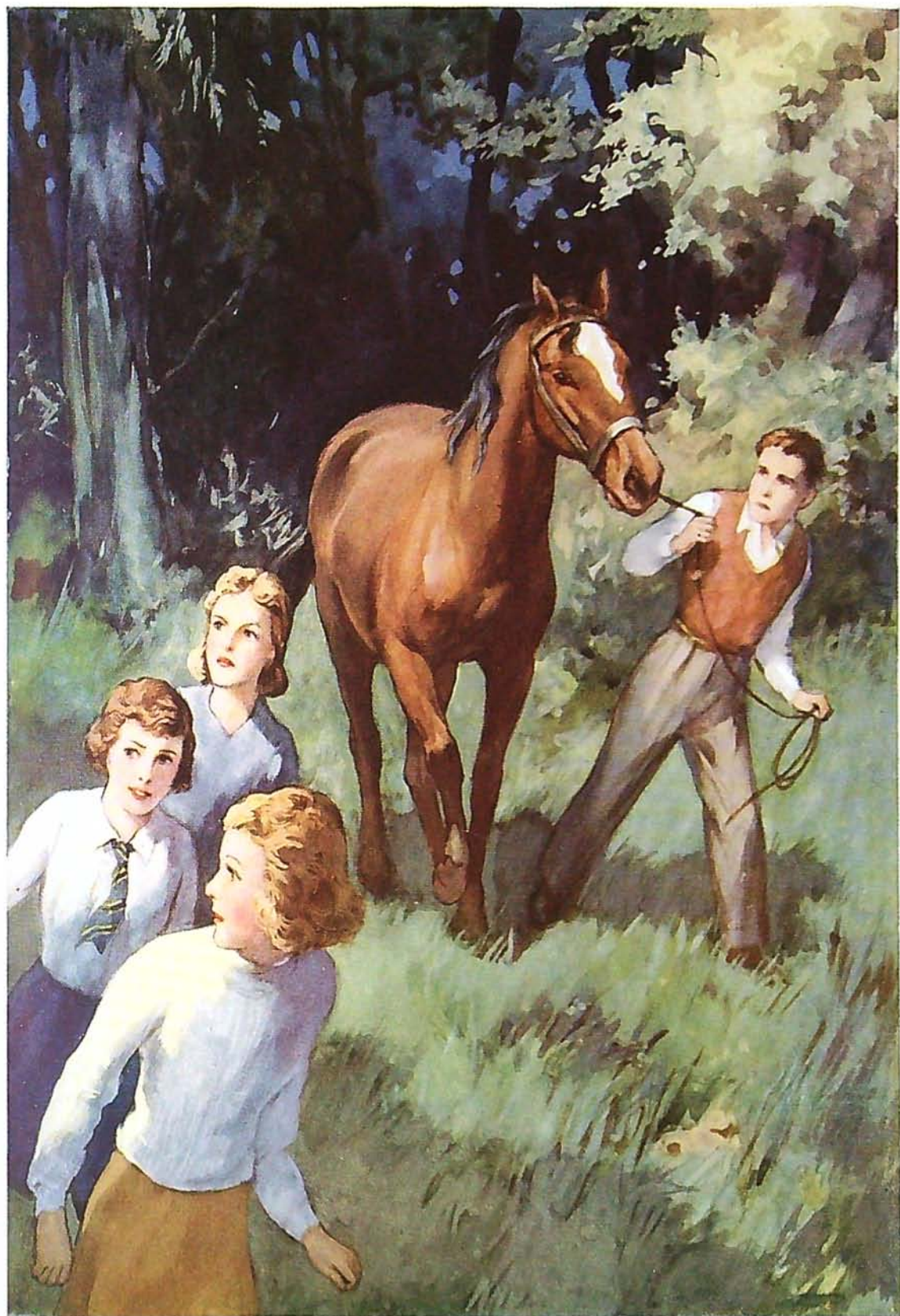
Jerry heaved a sigh of relief. He

would have to satisfy quite a few demands for different coloured paint here, a shelf there, and so on, and he wanted the matter settled so that he could get on with the various jobs at once.

"Right!" he said crisply. "Then let's get the cash and hand it over, so that we can have the van lugged home. We've been jolly lucky getting the first option and enough time to decide properly."

So the result of this was a rush by the four to get a cheque from their father, who had agreed to do the first squaring-up, to save the wait for post-office withdrawals.

"Now for the horse," he said, smiling at their excited faces. "As you know, I've got to buy it for Uncle Bill, who has agreed that you shall take it by easy stages to him at Cape Farm. So



STEALTHILY, THEY LED THE HORSE AWAY FROM THE GIPSY-CAMP

you will have your caravan holiday, with Uncle Bill's horse to pull you free of charge. How's that?"

"Caravan to the Cape—it sounds fine!" grinned Jerry.

"And we shall probably be glad to come back by train," said Gwen.

"You'll leave the caravan at Cape Farm," said Mr. Chester, "and then you'll be able to go there any time for a holiday."

The van-buyers knew they could safely leave the matter of the horse to their father; and when they were called into the stable-yard next day to inspect his purchase it was to approve the animal.

"He looks a dear!" cried Cherry.

"How well he stands! Thoroughbred, eh, Dad?"—this from Jerry.

Mr. Chester nodded.

"I know I can trust you four to look after him well. Remember, he's a valuable animal—and get him safely to Cape Farm."

"Can we name him, Daddy?" cried Connie, who was the youngest of the three sisters.

"Yes. If Uncle Bill doesn't like your choice he'll have to lump it—or try and get him to answer to another."

"Let's call him Adam!" cried Jerry.

"Adam?" shrilled the girls, with inquiring glances at their brother. There was always a real reason behind Jerry's notions.

He grinned mischievously. "Yes, Adam! He'll be pulling Eves along, so it sort of suits him. Agreed?"

And to the accompaniment of a peal of laughter, Adam was christened.

"Now we can really have the kind of holiday we wanted," Connie remarked, as they all worked hard next day on a thorough washing out and

washing down of the van before its final furbishing for the road.

"Windswept spaces and the open road," chanted Gwen, pausing with her pail to look round soulfully.

"Restful slumber under the stars!" warbled Cherry, twirling a mop with a reckless abandon that caught Jerry a crack on the head.

"And shower baths all for nothing when it rains," he growled, turning the hose he was wielding full on the three. "Get on, you miserable idlers! How d'you s'pose I'm going to start painting if you mess about spouting tripe?"

The girls screamed protests at him, but they resumed work with a will. They were pretty damp already, so a little more water didn't matter. What did matter was Jerry's painting.

The idea of a caravan holiday had sprung from an advertisement of a caravan for sale that the girls had seen in the local paper, and when Mr. Chester had told them that Uncle Bill, who was a farmer, had asked him to look out for a horse for him, the holiday began to take shape. It meant an entire change from cycling, or train or coach touring, and once the caravan was bought would be light on their pocket. It would also give vast enjoyment to Sweep, who would be able to revel in open country during the greater part of the hundred-mile journey to Cape Farm, as Uncle Bill's moorland farm was called. Sweep was the Chester's spaniel, and a highly intelligent and much-loved animal.

The girls paused for a minute during the scurry on the morning of departure to watch him amusedly.

"He knows there's something unusual in the wind, and that *he's* mixed

up with it," said Jerry. "Just look at him helping!" The dog pattered beside Jerry, holding on to a dragging guy-rope on a bivouac tent the boy was carrying out to stow at the back of the caravan.

It was a happy little party that set off in the cool of the morning for the long trek, with Jerry the acknowledged route-leader and water-fetcher, Cherry, the eldest girl, as storekeeper, and the other two as general helps. As each of the three girls was a fair cook, it had been agreed that they should take turn and turn about in getting meals. The business of washing-up was to be shared by all four, Jerry having kindly offered to help 'mop up.'

The 'mopping up' didn't refer only to washing-up, however. After a huge supper of fish and fried potatoes one evening, Cherry gave a groan that startled her sisters.

"Potatoes!" she said hollowly, in answer to their inquiring glances. "We've eaten the lot tonight. There isn't a speck to go with the bacon for breakfast. Jerry 'll have fits."

"Well, if he *will* stuff so many for supper, he'll have to put up with none for brekker," Gwen said calmly. "Gracious! I thought something was really wrong."

"It will be wrong in the morning," retorted Cherry. "That boy will be contrary all day if he isn't properly fed for a start. As for stuffing, do remember what hours he spent fishing for those lovely trout for us all. He warned us that he was hungry enough to eat a horse."

Connie laughed. "Yes, he did! We must look out or he'll be starting on Adam. *Then* where should we be? Don't worry though, Cherry. I'll be

up extra early in the morning and hunt for mushrooms. There are sure to be fine ones in this meadow, especially with this mist and dew coming after the hot sunshine. Leave it to me!"

Cherry's bothered expression cleared.

"Right-ho, Connie! Mushrooms would be a glorious treat, too, but if there *shouldn't* be any, I'll mix up some batter cakes to fry. *They'll* help to fill up the corners."

Connie was as good as her word. Before her sisters were awake or Jerry had stirred from his tent outside the caravan, she slipped out with a basket, rubber-booted against the long, dew-laden grass, the delighted Sweep at her heels.

The mist over the rather low-lying meadow had persisted, but this did not hamper Connie's search; mushrooms were soon being transferred to her basket.

Intent on her hunt and the thought of a luscious breakfast, the young girl shot upright suddenly. She stared around as a shrill whickering sounded close at hand.

Sunlight was piercing the damp mist, and just within the range of visibility Connie saw a colt staring at her in scared amazement.

Bidding Sweep keep quiet, Connie stood still herself for a moment or two to reassure the pretty little creature. Then she held out her hand, trying to entice it nearer. Ears working nervously, it whickered again, and it was only when an answering whinny was accompanied by the thunder of heavy hooves that Connie realised her danger. Evidently the mare was grazing the meadow, too, and had read alarm in the colt's call to her, though as yet the mist veiled her approach.



The mare galloped after her with bared teeth

"Golly! Which way shall I run?" whispered Connie. "Come on, Sweep!" she called, aloud, and took to her heels away from the colt.

It was well she had the dog with her, however. In another minute a backward glance showed her the mare galloping towards her, viciousness plain to be seen in its flattened-back ears and bared teeth.

Knowing what she did of animals, Connie knew that the mare feared harm for her colt and was bent on ridding it of the danger that threatened it. Connie screamed for help, and, luckily for her, aid was on the spot.

Jerry, tumbling pell-mell out of his tent at Connie's scream, grasped the situation at once through hearing the other sounds. Snatching up a stick from their fire pile, he dashed off barefooted towards them, his pyjamaed figure looming into Connie's view just as Sweep, barking furiously in front of the angry mare, caused her to turn from a direct attack on his young mistress.

At sight of Jerry's flaming stick, the mare lumbered away, with the colt skittering beside her.

"My goodness!" cried Connie a minute or two later, dumping her basket in front of her sisters, who had run out, wide-eyed, on hearing the commotion. "What a mercy Sweep popped out after me! The dear brave dog! I was terribly afraid he'd be kicked or trampled on."

Jerry patted the dog, who was wriggling his body in triumph.

"You needn't have worried, Connie," said Jerry. "Sweep knew better than to give the mare a chance of doing that. He was keeping his distance, though managing just what he wanted to do, all the same. Now, hurry up, whoever's cook this morning. I'm *starving!*"

There was a frantic scuttle then, and if Connie's legs shook a little still from her fright that didn't affect her nimble fingers as she peeled mushrooms. The breakfast was pronounced



passing a town about a mile from here, and I'd like to get some more films. Let's have a spot of tea, then I'll hop off."

But during teatime, with the van drawn into a field, it came out that the girls, too, were anxious to do some shopping.

"Well, then, you three go and bring my films," said Jerry. "I can get on with some developing in the van while you're gone."



"Smashing!" by the critical Jerry, and this to her was full reward.

As the trek went on, the Chesters' good opinion of Adam grew daily. Adam was the perfect jogger, amiable and trustworthy. Even Sweep seemed aware of his worth, he and the horse being on quite a comradely footing.

"I'm sure Adam has been used to doggy pals," Gwen said one day. "He looks so contented with Sweep trotting beside him. The way he looks round and whinnies when Sweep drops behind is really funny."

All kinds of interests cheered the journey. There were fishing, sketching, botanical hunts, and photography, to name a few. It was Jerry's craze for taking snapshots that called an early halt one day.

"I say, girls," he said, unslinging his camera, "d'you mind if we pull up for today? My map shows that we're by-

"They've eaten the salad!" screamed Cherry

"Goody! That suits us!" cried Cherry. "We'll just do the salad stuffs for supper while it's nice and light; then we'll be off with Sweep and leave you the freedom of the van."

The girls thoroughly enjoyed their shopping trip. There was no need for haste, they knew. To Jerry, shut up in a darkened caravan with his red lamp and his hypo, their absence would pass quite unnoticed until hunger drove him forth to bawl for them.

The way into the field had been open when they left; when they came back, they were surprised to see a couple of wooden bars laid across the gap, which a broken-down gate now failed to close.

Slipping in through the bars, the girls got a second surprise, and even Sweep halted as if taken aback.

All around the van and the grazing Adam was a big herd of cows!

"Good heavens! The salad! The supper!" Cherry screamed out. She and Sweep led the sudden rush forward.

Half a minute later, out upon the pandemonium of barks and shoos and moos, Jerry thrust a head and face over the top half of the van door.

"What the heck?" he roared, only to burst out a second after and join in the scrum.

At last the herd was routed.

"Every bit gobbled up!" Jerry cried, gazing at the churned up ground round the supper-table.

"The most glorious salad, too," wailed Cherry: "Beet, cucumber and the juiciest of lettuces! There were hard-boiled eggs, too; *everything* in it!"

"And now the everything has g-gone into the c-cows!" stuttered Connie.

She and Gwen had sunk to the ground, rocking with laughter.

"Get up! Get up, you little chumps!"

Jerry stormed. "If you don't rake up something else for supper in double-quick time, I shall go berserk."

"And that," Cherry said, as she and her sisters struggled to open tins of salmon and a jar of pickles, "when it was all *his* fault. *He* was too busy inside his dark-room to hear the wretched cows *crunching*!"

But a supper lost to marauding cows was only a minor trouble. A day or two later something happened to test all the young people.

Jerry, poring over a map after supper one evening, broke in upon the girls' light chatter to say: "Kindly note! Our next wide open space will be a moor. So you'd better stock up well from this village in the morning. I bet there'll be some grand scenery, and we shan't want to hurry."

The girls took the hint. There must be no running short of necessities to spoil chances of getting good snapshots and sketches. Out came Cherry's note-book. The three girls went into a huddle over housekeeping matters that lasted till bedtime.

The moorland scenery the travellers beheld next day was of a rare grandeur. Their enthusiasm presently tempted them to quit the regular road across the twenty-mile stretch for a wide track that looked very inviting.

"It leads to one of the villages, I expect. There are several on the moor," Jerry said. For once he did not trouble to look at his map, being too eager to follow the more attractive route to bother, for the time being, about where it actually led.

It proved a most fascinating detour. The moor stretched away before the travellers like the billowing waves of the sea. The wheels of the caravan

rolled noiselessly over the mossy track, which, though bumpy in places, gave no trouble to Adam, who was sturdy and strong. As a matter of fact, Adam was no doubt glad to leave the dusty road for restful ground where his footfalls were hardly to be heard at all. As for Sweep, he ran and barked joyously for no earthly reason other than sheer excitement.

All in all, it looked like being a perfect day—until the caravan came to THE BRIDGE. You could only think about it and talk of it in capitals, Cherry declared, because it was so extraordinary and loomed so large to them.

Jerry's map came out as soon as THE BRIDGE was reached.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed, after a minute or two's study of the map, during which time the girls gaped helplessly at the structure.

"Well, what about it?" Cherry asked evenly, as the boy stared open-mouthed at the narrow bridge, which spanned a swift stream.

"It's very old! It's a packhorse bridge," he said at length.

"H'm! If we pack the horse over, what about the rest?" Gwen said, beginning to giggle.

"Don't be daft," Jerry retorted. "A packhorse was one that carried a pack on its back. That could get over all right. This is different!"

Connie sniggered. "Do we take the van to pieces and pack it on Adam—or what?"

Jerry nodded fiercely at his smiling sisters.

"You can laugh!" he said. "But we're not going back ten miles over the same ground. We're going over the stream *somehow*, I can tell you."

"Hurrah! Tell us how—and tell Adam! Look at his ears flapping to and fro!" laughed Gwen.

Mirth ended, the tense business followed of measuring THE BRIDGE and the caravan, after which there was a groan from all four. The Chesters' wheeled home was too wide for the middle of THE BRIDGE!

"Even if we took the wheels off, it wouldn't go," said Jerry finally. "Well, we must make a ford crossing, as they have to in Africa."

"Mercy!" cried Connie. "Supposing we stick in the middle of the stream!"

"We shan't!" Jerry replied. "Adam'll see us through."

It was an optimism which the girls could not share, much as they admired Adam's ability and good temper. They listened rather anxiously to Jerry's instructions as he took off his shoes and socks and threw them inside the van.

"You'd all better do the same, in case you get dragged into the water," he said. "I want you to hang on to the van at the back to ease it down the bank, while I lead Adam."

The bank was a low one, and the water not more than twelve inches deep, even in the middle of the rippling stream, the bed of which was pebbly and almost flat. In spite of all these advantages, though, the girls were nervous. Their frantic squeals of "Look out!" and "Be careful!" soon started Sweep barking as if he scented danger.

The noise at last had an effect on Adam. Three girls tugging convulsively at the back of the caravan were a bit too much of a good thing, with the caravan once eased down the bank. Adam resented it. He stopped pulling, jerked at his bridle, and because Jerry

would not release it for him to play at drinking the clear water swishing so refreshingly about his fetlocks he grew restive.

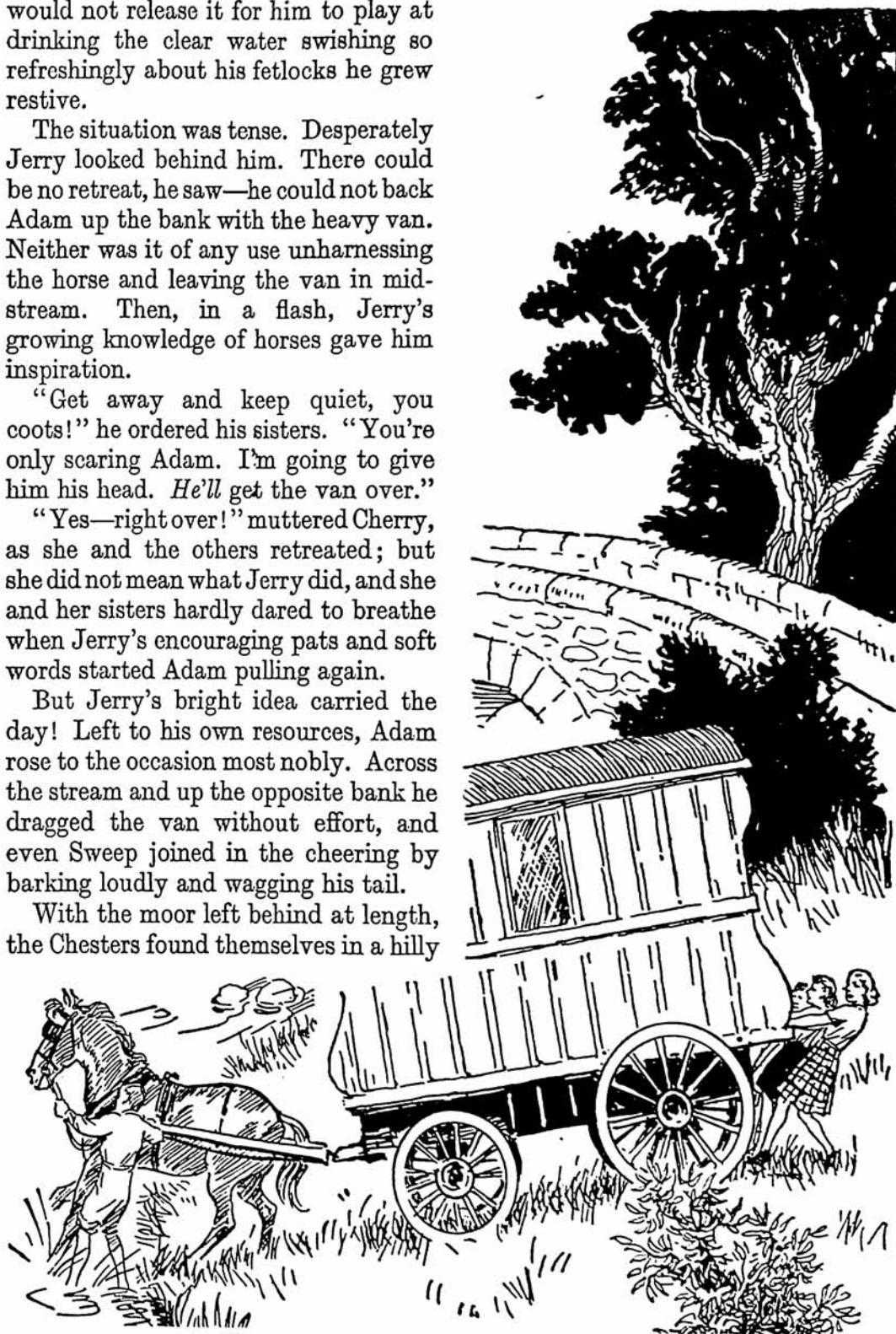
The situation was tense. Desperately Jerry looked behind him. There could be no retreat, he saw—he could not back Adam up the bank with the heavy van. Neither was it of any use unharnessing the horse and leaving the van in mid-stream. Then, in a flash, Jerry's growing knowledge of horses gave him inspiration.

"Get away and keep quiet, you coots!" he ordered his sisters. "You're only scaring Adam. I'm going to give him his head. *He'll* get the van over."

"Yes—right over!" muttered Cherry, as she and the others retreated; but she did not mean what Jerry did, and she and her sisters hardly dared to breathe when Jerry's encouraging pats and soft words started Adam pulling again.

But Jerry's bright idea carried the day! Left to his own resources, Adam rose to the occasion most nobly. Across the stream and up the opposite bank he dragged the van without effort, and even Sweep joined in the cheering by barking loudly and wagging his tail.

With the moor left behind at length, the Chesters found themselves in a hilly



The three girls tugged at the back while Jerry held the bridle

district interspersed with stretches of common. Here and there they came upon a small township, but for the most part only farms and villages studded their route, and the feeling of remoteness added to the charm of their holiday tour.

Cherry voiced the opinion of them all as they sat watching the stars appear one evening just before bedtime.

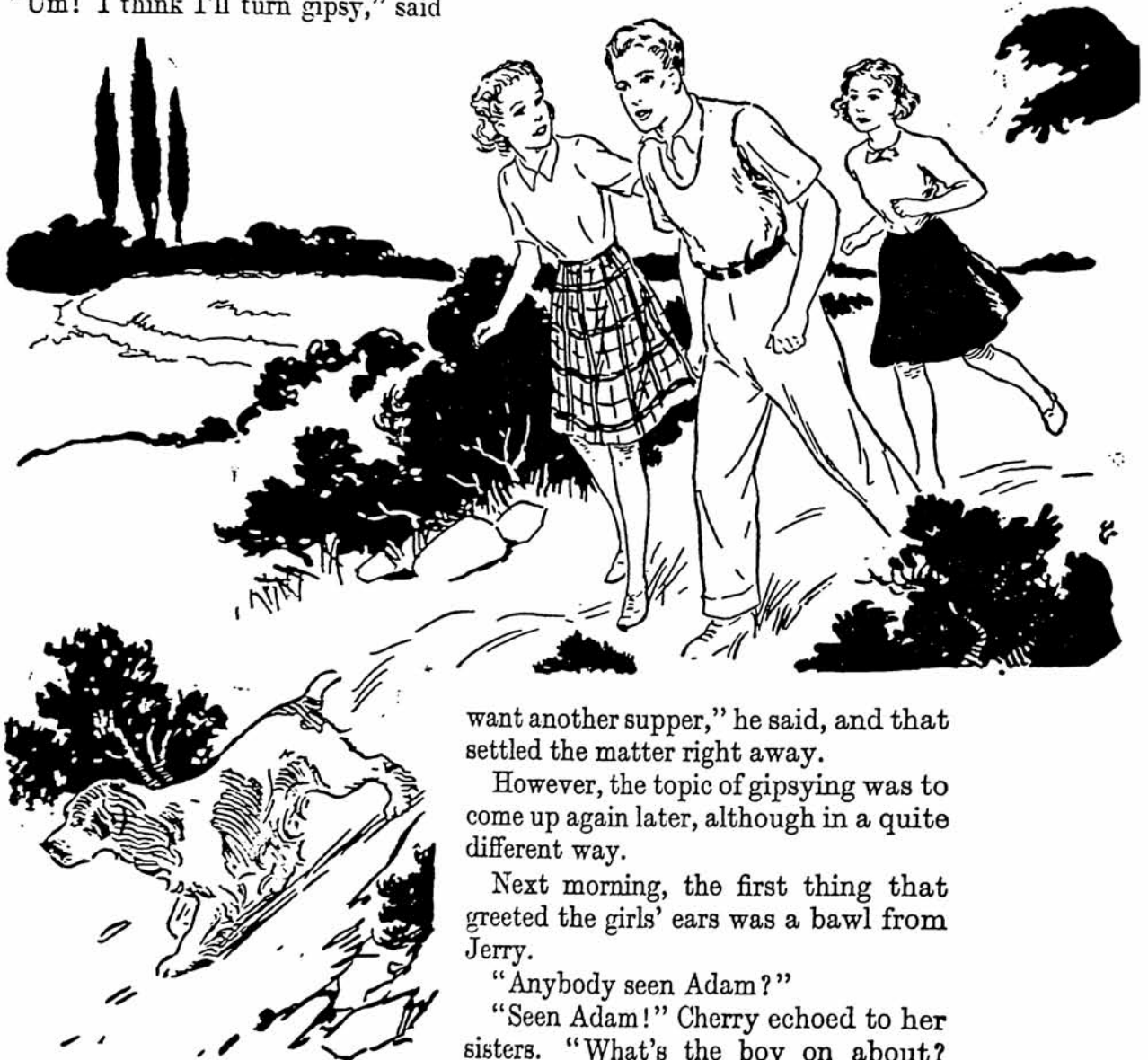
"It's wonderful out in the wilds like this," she said, thoughtfully.

"Um! I think I'll turn gipsy," said

Gwen lightly. "What say we *all* turn gipsies? Just fancy! No more lessons; no more bother about keeping clean and tidy; nothing to do but roam about and enjoy ourselves. Yes, I vote we do turn gipsies."

She finished up with a huge yawn, and Jerry gave her a poke in the ribs as he rose from the bracken-covered common.

"And I vote we turn *in*; else I shall



want another supper," he said, and that settled the matter right away.

However, the topic of gipsying was to come up again later, although in a quite different way.

Next morning, the first thing that greeted the girls' ears was a bawl from Jerry.

"Anybody seen Adam?"

"Seen Adam!" Cherry echoed to her sisters. "What's the boy on about?"

Does he think we've got Adam parked in the van? Here, you've finished dressing, Gwen. See what he's driving at. I'll be out in two minutes."

But in less than that time Gwen's head was thrust into the caravan.

"Adam's missing!" was her electrifying announcement. "Come on! We must all scout round and find him, Jerry says."

Breakfast was nearer elevenses time

"What is Sweep up to?" Connie cried. "He's going round in circles!"

Jerry eyed the animal with a puzzled frown, and just at that moment, as if resenting the slight to his good sense,



The four followed the excited dog

that morning, and the four ate it without appetite despite hunger and the morning freshness. For no sign of Adam had come from a thorough search of the immediate neighbourhood. Sweep seemed worried, too. He always ate his breakfast beside Adam. This morning his bone and pan of biscuit lay untouched, while he nosed about among the heather around the caravan.

Sweep began to bark and rush to and fro in front of his young owners.

Jerry sprang up. "He's trying to stir us up! Perhaps he's on a scent, and knows which way Adam's gone. Come on! Let's see what he does."

With hope revived, the four set off after the excited dog. Satisfied at having got them to follow him, Sweep broke into a trot, hurrying along with his nose close to the ground still.

The Chesters' curiosity rose to fever

pitch as they hurried after him. They had wandered all around the van, hoping for a clue to Adam's disappearance, but without finding anything. The severed strands of the rope which had hitched Adam to the back of the caravan might have meant a frayed spot which had snapped under an extra strong pull while the animal was grazing.

"I still can't think he's been stolen," Jerry said, as they bustled along. "We're in such an isolated spot, and none of us heard a thing all night."

"Even Sweep didn't, or he'd have barked and roused us," Cherry put in. "No, I believe Adam's just played us up, for once."

But it was not long after that before chill doubt came.

"Gipsies!" Jerry burst out suddenly, pointing ahead. "Huh! We weren't as isolated as we thought. Gosh! What if Adam *was* stolen, after all! Gipsies are cunning enough to get away with anything, and Adam's a valuable horse. *They'd* know that, trust them!"

Sweep knew something, too! He ran his owners right up to the gipsy encampment. The Chesters halted uncertainly as they came to close quarters with the rough-looking crowd.

"Whaddye want?" a man's hoarse voice shouted.

"Have you seen a horse straying?" Jerry asked tactfully. "We're looking for ours."

"Ain't seen no darned 'orse 'cept our own," came the surly answer. "Whaddye come barkin' 'ere for, hey?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, our dog brought us along; we thought he might be on the scent——"

"Scent nuthin'!" growled the man, scowling. "Think *we* got yer bloomin' 'orse, I s'pose? Well, we ain't, see, so

you clear off, sharp, or——" Here a flood of threatening abuse showed the Chesters all too plainly that it was no use staying and talking any longer.

"It's a case of 'you have been warned'!" Jerry muttered to the girls.

Calling the reluctant Sweep to heel, they made themselves scarce.

But once out of earshot of the gipsies, Cherry burst out fiercely: "That man was just bluffing, I believe. I feel certain those wretches have taken Adam, and Sweep tracked him there."

"Just what I think," Jerry said. "But we can't prove anything without actually finding Adam in their clutches."

"What shall we do—hunt up some police?" queried Gwen.

Jerry shook his head; he looked very worried.

"We're several miles from the nearest place. It would be such a tramp. Besides, we ought to make quite certain first that Adam hasn't strayed—he *might* have gone in the gipsies' direction without their having seen him. In any case, we can't accuse them of stealing just because we're suspicious."

"But we must do *something*," wailed Connie.

"Of course," Jerry replied, "and I'll tell you what. If we don't find Adam by nightfall, I'll do a sleuth in the gipsies' neighbourhood while you three keep Sweep in the caravan. He mustn't be allowed to follow me; he might bark or growl and give me away."

Weary hours of searching resulted in no sign of the horse, and twilight found the four in a more dejected state than ever. The girls were secretly dreading, too, Jerry's plan for spying at the gipsies' encampment. What if he were heard or seen and attacked?

Cherry was just about to breathe a

word of warning about the growing moonlight when they all jumped hastily to their feet, while Sweep uttered a deep growl.

From somewhere close by came a loud hissing sound.

"The ditch!" breathed Jerry, making for the dry, grassy gully near which they had camped.

The girls were close at his heels, so they saw almost as soon as he did a head illumined by the moonlight showing above a forest of fern.

"Ssst! Don't make a noise!" a boyish voice said. "I'm here about the 'orse!"

Silencing Sweep, who was starting to bark, the Chesters pressed forward eagerly. In response to Jerry's bidding, the boy showed a little more of himself, although he kept looking furtively round. He was a handsome lad in the gipsy fashion, but there was a look of cunning in his face that made the Chesters eye him narrowly.

"I'm Joe Shale. Mustn't be long; they might miss me," he said, in a low tone. "I belong to the gippos. I saw you come after the 'orse. They stole it, and it's to be taken to a dealer in the mornin'."

"Well?" queried Jerry, as the stranger paused.

"'E's a good 'orse," the gipsy boy went on after a second or two. "They'll get a lot of money for 'im, but they won't give *me* any."

Jerry shot a quick glance at his sisters, and judged that they were as uneasy as he was. Was it a racket? If the boy was out to get from them what his people would get by the sale to dealers, the young Chesters were fairly up against it. Adam would have been spirited away before they could get in

touch with their father, or before they could reach the police.

Bent on knowing the worst at once, Jerry rapped out sharply: "Well, say what you're driving at. Why have you come to us?"

"Cross me palm wi' some silver, and I'll tell ye——"

But here the lad's tone changed to a surly growl. With a lightning movement, Jerry pounced upon him in the ditch and was holding his wriggling figure in a firm grip.

"You tell us where the horse is at once, you young cub," he demanded, "or I'll give you something different from silver."

But with the gipsy's struggles becoming more violent, the girls grew alarmed. If he got away there would be no hope of hearing anything. So Cherry interrupted hastily.

"Let's hear what he wants, Jerry," she said, and the gipsy boy snatched at his chance.

"'Tain't much, lady," he cried, ceasing his wriggling to look craftily up at her. "I've 'ad enough of being chivvied and knocked about in the camp. There's a circus at Marsham; it's about twenty mile from 'ere, and I wants to run away to join it. If I just 'as enough food to start me and a bit of silver to 'elp me along, that's all I'm askin'; and I'll tell ye where to find yer 'orse before 'e's sold."

Jerry released his hold on the boy and sprang up out of the ditch.

"Wait there a minute," he ordered, and drawing a little away with his sisters he muttered to them: "We've plenty of grub, so we can manage that, but how much cash can we raise?"

A hasty calculation of means and needs led to an offer of ten shillings for

information about Adam. The gipsy boy's eyes glistened as he nodded an eager agreement, and when the girls had made up a parcel of food for him Jerry said: "Now, where's our horse, Joe? This little lot is yours as soon as we know."

"'E's tied up in a wood t'other side o' the camp," came the prompt answer.

"How shall we know you're not tricking us?" Jerry demanded. "As

played us false, I'll hunt you up and skin you."

The gipsy's perfect teeth showed in a grin at that threat. Then: "Hurry!" he urged, and, dodging down, he disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived.

"D'you think it is true?" breathed Cherry anxiously.

The silvery moonlight showed doubt on Jerry's face.



They held their breath as the man passed by.

likely as not, you'll set your people on to us if we go near the camp."

"'Struth, I won't!" the gipsy replied quickly. "'Cos why? 'Cos I ain't a-goin' back to the camp, see? I'm goin' to make tracks, and it'll give you a chance to do it, too. They might think I've gone off on the 'orse to get away from 'em, and be lookin' for a boy on a 'orse, see?"

The Chesters did see. The boy's cunning might serve them well if they only *could* get Adam back.

"Right-ho! You push off, then," Jerry said. "But, mind you, if you've

"Don't know! It might even be a trick to get us away from the van and do some more thieving. But it'll be best to go and see, anyhow. We'll leave Sweep on guard in the caravan, and all go to the wood. It won't take us long if we run."

Even doubt could not keep a sneaking hope at bay, and tiredness was forgotten. But skirting the gipsy encampment was a breathtaking affair. The Chesters felt brave enough until they saw the gipsies moving about in the light of their hurricane lamps, but from

then on they went in fear lest a prowling lurcher should come upon them and bark an alarm signal.

They were within a couple of hundred yards of the busy supper scene in the nomads' camp, and almost level with it, when Jerry touched the girl nearest him and whispered urgently: "Down!"

With the warning passed on, the next few seconds saw the four lying flat among the tall bracken. As far as possible they had kept in the shadow of scattered clumps of bushes and small trees, but there were patches where the moonlight could not be avoided.

Cover had been taken not an instant too soon. Jerry's sharp ears had caught a sound like the snapping of twigs, and, sure enough, almost immediately afterwards a man came out from some brushwood close at hand carrying a bundle of faggots for the camp fire.

The youngsters held their breath as they peered through the screening fern. They were almost in his path. In that bright moonlight a roving glance might easily pierce their hiding-place. In that awful event, any chance they had now of tracking Adam would be snatched away from them.

But a sudden uproar in the camp sent the man loping towards it, his interest only in the brawl which had evidently broken out there.

"Oh, thank heaven!" muttered Gwen. "I felt ready to scream with the suspense. Let's *run* while that row is going on; nobody's likely to see or hear us."

It was risky, but the four took to their heels towards the dark mass of trees they could see not far ahead, caution pulling them up only when they came to the fringe of the wood.

"Listen a minute or two!" whispered Jerry, and before long their straining ears gave them a clue—a stamping hoof, which told them that a tethered horse was not far away.

Into the shadowy depths they crept, intent now on only one thing, the rescue of Adam, gipsies or no gipsies.

They could have shouted in their relief and joy when they reached him. "Adam!" breathed Jerry.

Triumph had to be bottled up for the time being. Not even risking speech, they crept away again with their prize, terrified lest a sudden whinny should attract the attention of the gipsies.

Fortunately, though, Adam held his peace, only a snort and a toss of the head telling of his pleasure at being once more in the company of his rightful owners.

Back at the caravan, Jerry spoke urgently.

"Thank goodness Adam's fresh, because we must push off straight away and put all the distance we can between us and those thieving vagabonds. That boy Joe said that they might suspect him. Well, so they might, but we can't bank on their not nosing round us again. Cherry, you and I must do first watch as we travel. Connie and Gwen can take on after they've had a sleep."

So the caravan moved on.

It was during the second watch of the journey, and just at sunrise, that Sweep gave a warning growl. Jerry was awake in an instant and peering out of the van over the heads of his two younger sisters.

"Pull up a minute!" he whispered to Connie, who held the reins. As she obeyed, he added: "There's somebody about. I'll scout round the van."

He was soon back, but the girls noticed that he looked grim.



"Drive on slowly," he said to Connie; then, taking his stand at the back of the van, he stared intently through its tiny curtained window. A minute or so later he caught Sweep up in his arms and pointed something out to the dog.

"Rats! Hunt 'em out, boy!" he said, and released him from the van.

Din broke out half a minute later. Connie pulled up again without any instructions from her brother. As a matter of fact, Jerry was hardly able to voice any at that moment. His grimness had gone; instead, he was shaking with laughter as he scuttled outdoors, beckoning his sisters to follow.

The sight they saw stirred them to mirth, too. Sweep had hunted his 'rat' all right. Barking his hardest, he raced round and round a big blackberry bush, right in the centre of which reared up the head and shoulders of the gipsy who had abused and threatened the Chesters at the camp.

"The brute was trailing us, meaning to get Adam again, I bet," Jerry said, as soon as he could speak; "but when I sent Sweep after him he made one clean leap right into the middle of the bush. I never saw anything so funny in my life!"

"Get back!" he cried. "There'll be a flood!"

"Then Joe's red herring across the trail didn't work," Cherry said.

"Well, he only said it might," Jerry reminded her. "These gipsies are too cunning for words. Anyway, they weren't leaving anything to chance. I bet this chap wishes he *had* done, though. Just listen to him whining! Drive on, Connie, I'll call Sweep off in a minute or two and follow."

Having warded off any further danger to Adam, for the gipsy went away thoroughly scared by Sweep's teeth, the Chesters were soon jogging contentedly onwards, satisfied that they had seen the last of the horse-dealers.

It was a very lively party that camped one evening on the towpath of a river and made plans for a shopping and sightseeing two days in the neighbourhood.

"If it's as sweltering tomorrow as it's been today," Cherry said, as she beat

off an army of gnats, "I don't think we shall do half what we've planned. We shall just lie under these trees and snooze."

However, lying under trees and snoozing was *not* to be the order of the next day. The sultry heat was broken just before breakfast time by a terrific thunderstorm.

The first distant rumbles were not much heeded by any of the caravanners, the girls being busy in the van and Jerry rooting about inside his tent. But with the breaking over them of a sudden deluge, his yell reached the girls.

"Goodness! What a storm!" shrilled Gwen. "And listen to Jerry! What is he up to?"

Jerry and Sweep burst into the van a few seconds later, each carrying some of the boy's belongings.

"The tent collapsed on us!" cried Jerry. "Gosh! What a weight of water! Lucky we hadn't far to dodge when we got out! Breakfast ready? Good! So am I *for* it!"

The meal was hardly finished when Cherry held up a finger.

"Listen!" she cried. "Surely it can't be only the rain making such a noise! Isn't that shouting I can hear?"

There was a rush for the van door then.

Shouting and the drumming hooves of a galloping horse greeted them. The Chesters looked out awe-stricken. What had been a placid river was now a surging torrent.

The horse whose hoofbeats they had heard came into view, racing along the towpath. As it came upon the caravan, it was reined in abruptly. Its rider shouted to the four:

"Get back from the bank! The lock

gate's been struck by lightning up above. There'll be a flood!"

Through the curtain of rain the Chesters stared out at the speaker, and almost together in the next minute they shouted: "Joe! Joe Shale!"

Grinning from the back of his steaming piebald, Joe shouted back:

"Yus, I made it! I'm with Binder's Circus. I've got to race a warning along 'ere. Now you beat it—back from the bank!"

As he dashed on, the Chesters acted on gipsy Joe's information for the second time on their tour, and moved camp in double-quick time.

They were squatting in the doorway of the caravan after the worst of the storm was over, enjoying the freshness, and listening to the rejoicing birds, when Jerry remarked sagely: "Well, Joe's done us two good turns, so he was worth what we paid him. Gosh! Didn't he ride well? If Binder's Circus ever comes our way, we'll go and see it."

The three girls warmly agreed.

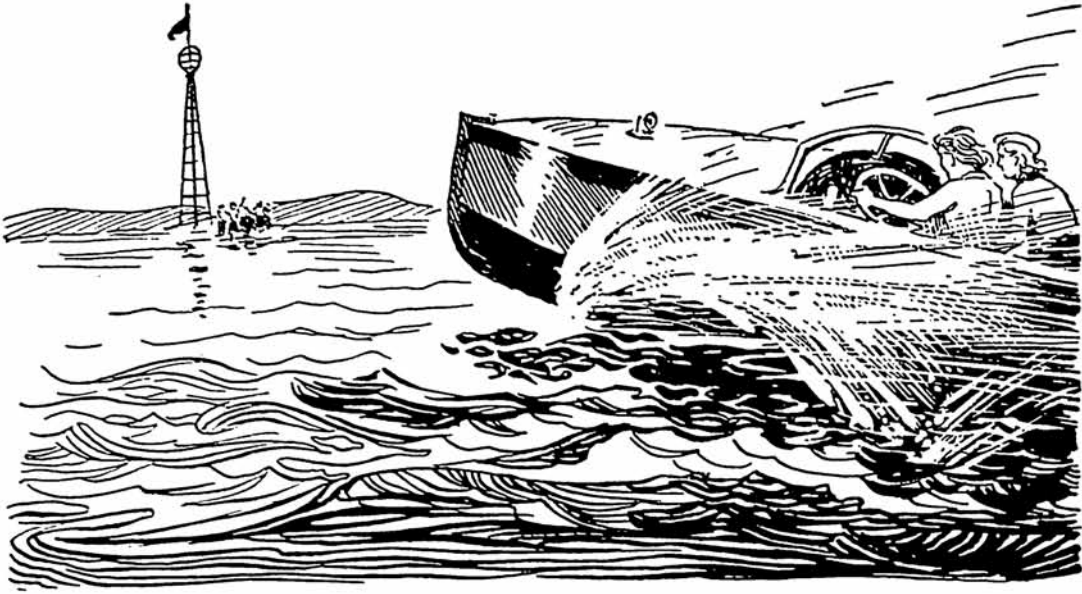
A few days later, Jerry halted the caravan on the brow of a hill, and called out to the girls to come and look.

Curiously, they gazed in the direction he pointed out.

"Do you see a greystone roof, and blue smoke rising from the chimney?" he asked. "Well, that's it! Don't you see—we're at journey's end! That's Cape Farm!"

And there on the hilltop, with Sweep barking happily with them, the four caravanners stood and cheered because the caravan had reached the Cape!

And faithful Adam looked round and whinnied, as much as to say: "Well, don't forget me! I brought you here!"



DANGER TIDE

by

F. W. Ludlam

"Ship's company—stand at—EASE!"

Miss Barry, Commanding Officer of the Haven Bay Unit of the Girls' Training Corps, looked over her girls assembled on parade at the end of the evening meeting. Miss Barry, who had served as a second officer in the W.R.N.S., had organised the unit on proper Navy lines, and she was becoming quite pleased with the smart and seamanlike bearing of most of her cadets.

"A few announcements about the inter-unit swimming meeting, at Southam Lido, on Saturday afternoon," she began. "I have decided that Maintop Division shall provide the entrants for the team events."

There was a stir and a murmur among the girls, particularly among those of the Forecastle Division. Olga Brooks, their petty officer, raised her hand.

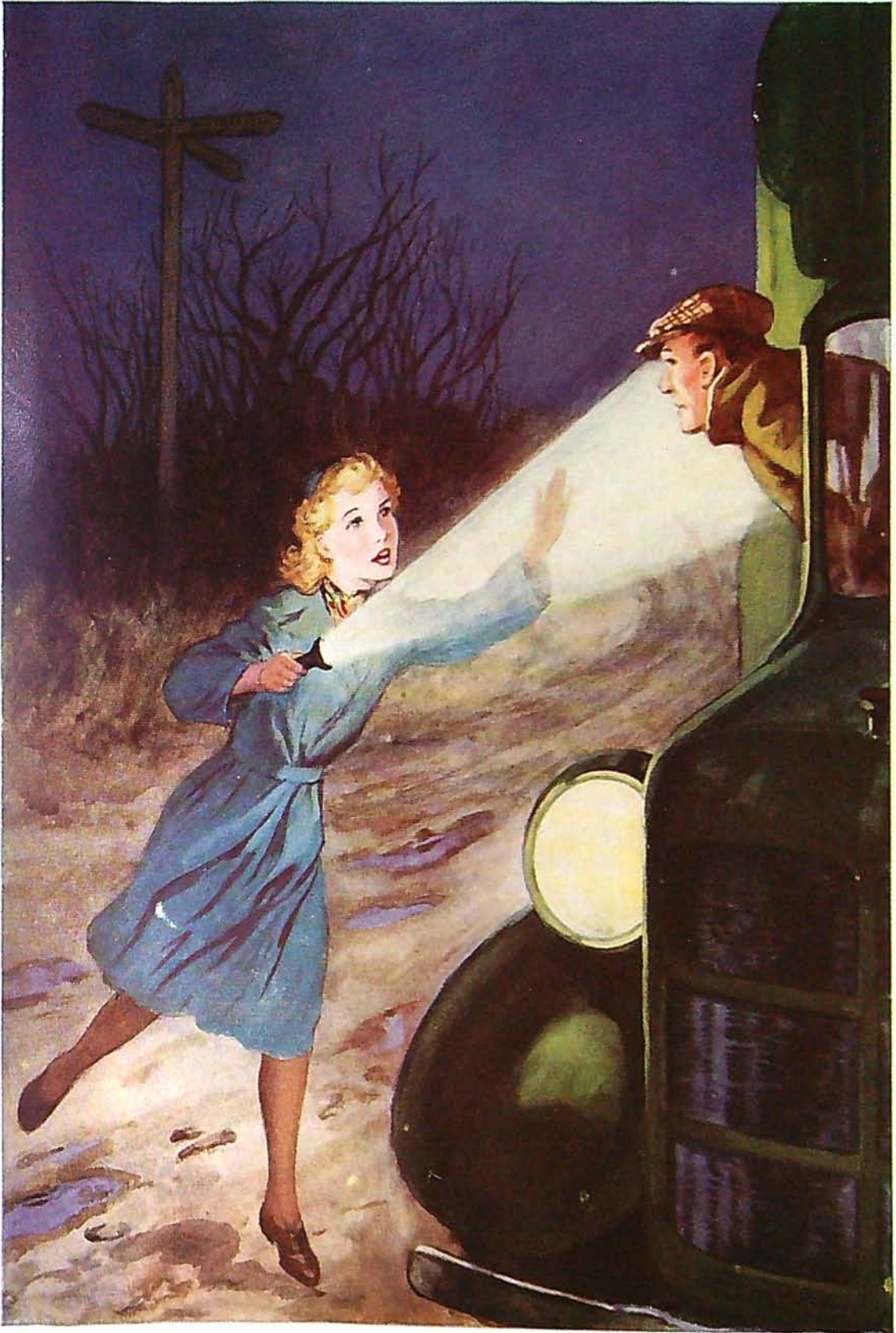
"Well, Olga?"

"If you please, ma'am, I understood that we were to represent the unit. We won all the events against Maintop in the inter-divisional trials."

Miss Barry's face took on its sternest expression, and Olga became a trifle uneasy. She was even further perturbed when the Commanding Officer spoke.

"It may well be," began Miss Barry, in icy tones, "that the Forecastle Division excelled itself in the swimming events. All the same, it will not have the honour of representing the unit. The Forecastle Division must first learn to conduct itself in a proper manner. I am very displeased with the behaviour of the division at recent parades. Girls coming aboard late on the flimsiest of excuses, duties neglected, disturbances at instruction, lounging, and slovenly attitudes on parade, have all been noticeable."

She paused; then went on.



"STOP! STOP!" FRIDA SHOUTED
As "The Little Fox" (p. 89)

"I had intended to talk privately to the division after dismissal, but it may do you all good to have what must be said in public. Forecastle Division is letting the unit down. There must be a change!"

The Forecastle girls exchanged shamefaced glances, aware that the C.O.'s criticism was justified. Petty Officer Olga Brooks, however, recovering from her first embarrassment, frowned with indignation. In her heart she knew that what Miss Barry said was true. She knew, too, that it was mainly her own fault for failing to keep her division up to the mark. But she would not admit it.

"I am sorry to say that it has not been possible to hire a motor-coach to take us over to Southam," continued Miss Barry. "We shall therefore proceed by train. Fares will be paid from the unit funds. We shall go on the two p.m. train, changing at Halsbridge Junction. It will be rather a rush, I am afraid, because the train does not arrive at Southam until a few minutes after the swimming contest has actually begun. However, I will telephone the officer in charge and see if she will arrange for some of the other units to swim off their heats first. There does not appear to be any other trains—only those before noon, and they would be much too early. Don't forget, then. Parade at the station at thirteen-fifty-five hours—five minutes to two, for landlubbers—on Saturday. And," Miss Barry concluded, looking significantly towards the Forecastle Division, "let no one be late on parade!"

There was silence, every girl busy with her own thoughts.

"Ship's Company! Attention! Turning for'd—divisions right and left—Turn! Dis—miss!"

Excitedly the girls filed out of the Nissen hut which served as their headquarters. An eager group surrounded Betty Wilson, the petty officer of the Maintop Division.

"I say, this is one up for Maintop!" exclaimed Rene Harris, delightedly. "Just look at Olga! She looks furious!"

Olga was surrounded by some of her own girls, and a regular indignation meeting was in progress. Olga looked round angrily.

"Pipe down!" she called. "I can't help what has happened."

"You are supposed to keep the division in order," declared one of the girls. "You are no good as Divisional Petty Officer, Olga."

The other girls chorused approval of this statement, which was, to say the least, extremely unfair—the more so because the girl who made the remark was the most unruly spirit in the division.

Olga's dark eyes flashed. "I'll show you whether I am any good or not!" she exclaimed. "Everyone be on parade on Saturday. You may be wanted to represent the unit, after all."

Olga moved away, and then stopped to examine a small booklet which she produced from her coat pocket. She studied one of the pages closely for a moment, and then returned to the hut, where Betty and her girls were still discussing the forthcoming swimming contest.

Olga walked straight up to Betty and held out her hand. "Best of luck, Betty."

Betty smiled with pleasure.

"Thank you, Olga. Nice of you to take it like this. We don't want to cause any ill feeling in the unit."

"Of course not. Look, I have something to tell you. It's going to be a fearful rush getting to Southam Lido. It's all right for those of us who are just going as spectators and to compete in the individual events in the second half of the afternoon, but it will be a rush for the team."

"Yes, but Miss Barry says that there is no other train, unless we go in the middle of the morning."

"Not directly to Southam, there is not. But if you get the one o'clock express to Mayport. . . ."

"To Mayport?" Why, that is miles away from Southam, right on the other side of the estuary, in fact!"

"Yes, but the point is you can catch a connecting train there which comes back through Halsbridge and straight through to Southam. You will actually travel about half as far again as you would the direct way; but you will be in Southam three-quarters of an hour before the others and have nice time to get to the Lido, change, and probably put in a bit of practice."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Betty. "This sounds a bit complicated. We go

down to Mayport to come back again. Why can't we change at Halsbridge?"

"Because the express does not stop there. It goes round the junction on the loop line. It will be a bit extra on the fare, of course, but Miss Barry won't mind that if it is just for the team. Otherwise the whole unit could travel that way. You will be at Southam by two-fifteen."

"It seems worth trying," agreed Betty. "I will speak to Miss Barry. I could do with one or two practice dives from that high board at the Lido before the events. You are sure that this is right, Olga?"

"There it is on the timetable, in black-and-white! And, anyway, I should know. My father is the station-master!"

"Of course! Right! We will do as Olga suggests, girls. Thanks, Olga."

"Don't thank me," murmured Olga, sweetly. "Only too pleased, I assure you."

II

Maintop Division descended from the express at Mayport station and clus-



"There's no train until five o'clock," he said

tered on the platform. Betty turned to a porter.

"Which platform for Southam, please?"

"Number four, miss. Change at Halsbridge. But there is no train now until five o'clock."

"What? But I thought that there was a train connected with this one."

"Not now, miss. There used to be, but it was stopped when the new timetables came in last week."

The girls exchanged glances of alarm.

"Whatever are we going to do?" exclaimed Rene Harris. "Can't we get back to Halsbridge? If we could get there by half past two we could at least catch the same train as the others will be on."

The porter shook his head.

"No train to Halsbridge until four. And you would still have to wait for the connection."

"Are there no any buses?" asked Janet Robertson, the Scotch girl.

"None through to Halsbridge. There will be one just about due to leave outside the station which will take you part of the way. You can get as far as Fisherman's Ford; then it is about five miles into Halsbridge. You will just catch it, if you run."

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Betty. "Thanks, porter. Come on, everybody! We had better take that bus."

The bus carried the party along a lonely road bordering the wide, sand-choked estuary of the River Hals, which below Halsbridge had a breadth of about three miles. The tide was out, and no trace of a channel could be seen amid the wide expanse of sand. Away to the west, along the farther shore, rose the high land above Southam. The girls, looking from the bus windows,

could even make out the buildings at their intended destination, and particularly the tall white tower of the Lido.

"Fisherman's Ford," called the conductor, suddenly.

The girls stepped out, and the bus rolled away down a side road. Ahead, the Halsbridge road led away across the marshes bordering the estuary. It was completely empty of traffic, and Betty's hopes that they might perhaps be able to get a lift on a lorry were dashed.

"Not much of a place, is it?" said Rene. "Not a house, nor even a human being in sight. Looks as though we shall have to walk into Halsbridge. We have missed the races, I reckon, in any case."

Val Carstairs stopped and looked thoughtfully back across the road and the wide sands beyond. The white tower of the Lido gleamed in the sun.

"So near—and yet so far!" said Rene, following Val's gaze. "It cannot be more than three miles, and we have to travel about fourteen to get there."

"I was just thinking," said Val. "I seem to have heard somewhere that one can walk across the estuary from here at low tide. That is why this place is called Fisherman's Ford. Wait a minute!"

She produced a local map from her bag, and opened it out. The estuary of the Hals was clearly shown, and, right across from Fisherman's Ford to just above Southam, was marked a double dotted line with the inscription FORD-ABLE AT LOW WATER.

"This looks tempting," said Betty. "I remember this now. It can't be much more than three miles. Why, we could get across in time to compete in the contest! But if we try it we must

not lose any time. The tide must be almost on the turn."

"It is just after two, now," observed Janet, consulting her wrist-watch. "We could do that wee distance under the hour."

"I'm game to try it, for one," said Rene, eagerly. "If we have to walk I would rather walk three miles towards our destination than five away from it."

The party struck down to the sands, Betty borrowing Val's map and taking the lead.

"Apparently we make straight for that beacon, ahead," she said. "It marks the channel up to Halsbridge at high water, and it is about half-way across."

"It is what the sailors call Jack-in-the-Basket, isn't it?" asked Peggy, one of the younger girls.

The others laughed at the quaint name, but Betty nodded.

"That's him, sure enough, Peggy. I have often noticed it from the sea-front at Southam."

They trudged on across the sands, now and again having to splash through shallow rivulets of water in the hollows between the banks. Ever nearer grew the curious structure known as Jack-in-the-Basket, a high, spidery framework of distinctive appearance set up for the use of sailors as a navigation mark.

As they progressed, the stretches of water grew successively deeper, and to reach the beacon they had finally to wade knee-deep across a wide channel. It was evident that the tide was on the turn. Gaining the beacon, they halted in dismay. Clear ahead was a huge, open expanse of water. It was the main channel already being filled by the floodtide.

"We can't get through this!" exclaimed Rene.

"It is wide, certainly," agreed Betty. "It may not be so deep, though. I will try it."

Watched by the others, the petty officer waded out into the water. For thirty yards it deepened gradually, and then Betty paused to hitch up her skirt. She took another step and abruptly was out of her depth.

"Oh, Betty!" gasped Janet, fearfully.

She ran forward into the water, for Betty had vanished. Rene and some of the others followed, eyes searching the sea where their petty officer had disappeared.

"Look out!" called Janet, the water over her waist. "The tide is like a mill-race. Get back—oh!"

She was swept from her feet, and in a moment was battling with the powerful current. A few seconds of desperate struggling and then Rene grabbed her, and the two girls scrambled and splashed ashore.

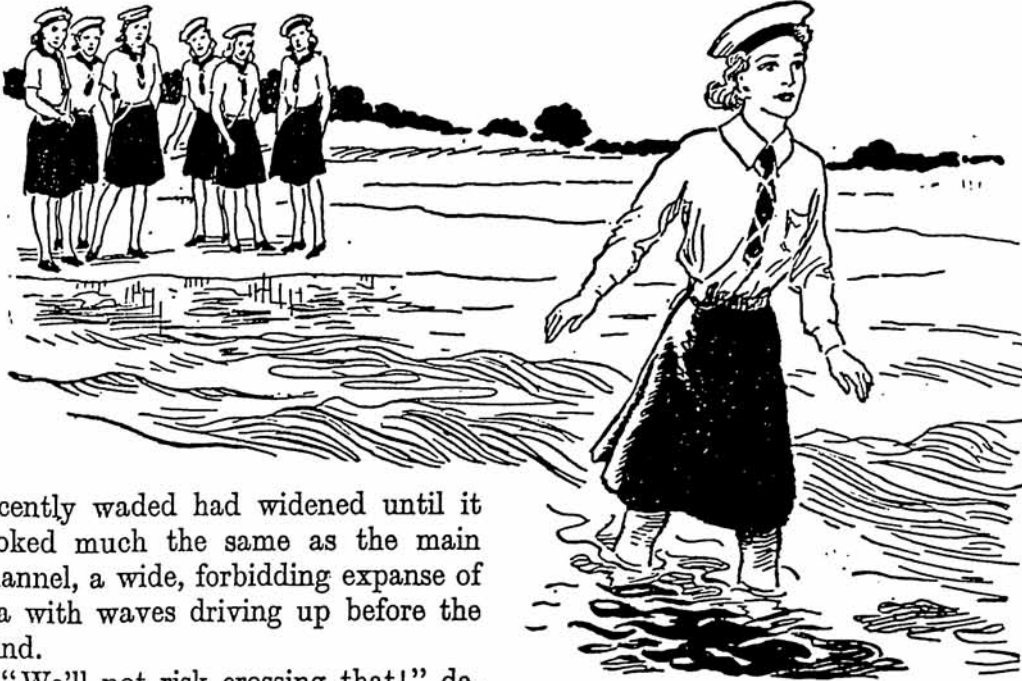
"Oh dear!" gasped Janet. "I thought I should be drowned. You can't do anything against the tide; it just sucks you under. It's got Betty."

Stunned by the sudden tragedy, the girls stood at the water's edge looking over the sea, but there was no sign of Betty. At length Janet started up.

"We must try and get back the way we came," she declared, "or we may all be drowned."

Dazedly, hardly able to leave the place where they had last seen Betty, but realizing the futility of lingering, the girls moved away.

But when they retraced their steps across the sandbank they saw that the channel through which they had so



Betty waded out into the water

recently waded had widened until it looked much the same as the main channel, a wide, forbidding expanse of sea with waves driving up before the wind.

"We'll not risk crossing that!" declared Janet.

"But what can we do?" asked Val, in desperation. "This sandbank is covered at high water. We're trapped by the tide! And the wind is getting up."

"Freshening up for a gale," said Janet. "See how hard and bright the sun seems. It is always like that when it is going to blow. What are we going to do? Girls, we're cut off!"

III

Olga Brooks climbed lightly up the steps of the high diving platform, at Southam Lido. The swimming contest had begun, and the Haven Bay Unit, upon arrival, had been very disconcerted to find that their team had not appeared. A hasty rearrangement had been necessary, and Forecastle Division had, after all, been given the honour of representing the Unit. Miss Barry had not been too pleased over the matter, but she had little choice, as none of her

other girls approached the form necessary for the inter-unit events. The C.O. was also rather worried as to what had actually happened to Betty and the Maintop Division.

Olga, who knew rather more about the missing girls than she had thought wise to tell anyone, was feeling extremely pleased. It had been so simple to trick Betty with the out-of-date copy of the railway timetable, and the stationmaster's daughter felt that she had been really smart. There was only one hitch. The Forecastle girls were not doing well in the competition. Haven Bay, in fact, stood little chance of winning unless Olga herself could gain full points in the diving events.

She walked out on to the platform, bracing herself against the wind. The afternoon was turning somewhat unpleasant. The wind was rising and the broad estuary was a ruffling expanse of grey-green water, the surf breaking

across the shallows. The sea was empty of all craft, for few ships at any time ventured into the dangerous channel of the Hals, and the threatening signs of gale had caused even the few fishing boats which worked inshore to put back to the beach.

A black speck like a buoy showed amid the seas. Olga knew that it was the navigation mark called Jack-in-the-Basket. As she looked towards it she observed a sudden flash from its top, a tiny gleam appearing and vanishing. She stared, wondering. Then, in a flash she recognized it for what it was. Three short flashes, three long, then three short again. A pause, and the group was repeated. Someone out there was signalling—signalling S O S in the Morse Code, the international call for assistance.

Excitedly Olga looked down. She saw Miss Barry at the foot of the diving tower. At her call the C.O. climbed up beside her, bringing a pair of binoculars, which she trained upon the beacon.

Miss Barry gave an exclamation and handed the glasses to Olga. Staring through them, Olga made out a group of figures clustered round the beacon. Waves were sweeping to the foot of the structure. The figures were all girls, and Olga knew very well what girls they were.

Miss Barry looked searchingly at her, but wasted no time in questions. She also had recognized the distant figures, and at once set about the organization of rescue. She hurried down from the diving platform and sought out the commander of the local girls, Mrs. Hargreaves, who had organized the swimming contest.

The Southam unit had a motor-boat, which they kept on the beach slipway,

and it was immediately made ready. It was pulled down to the water by scores of willing hands, and launched into the surf after some difficulty.

Heedless of soaked clothes, Miss Barry waded out and climbed inboard.

"One hand to come with me," she called to the girls. "One volunteer to help."

Olga scrambled inboard at once. She was scared by the unexpected turn that her little plot to delay Betty and the others had taken. The engine was started and the craft stood out from the beach.

The trip was comparatively short, but the sea, tearing across the shallows, drove up in a confused and dangerous ground-swell. The beacon was often obscured by driving spray as they closed it. None but Miss Barry ever realized just how difficult the rescue really was. The way the motor-boat nosed into the sandbank, stayed there just long enough for the girls to scramble aboard, and then got clear again without being onset by the surf, seemed almost effortless. It was really, however, fine seamanship, seamanship which Miss Barry had perfected during her experiences in the Senior Service.

It was Janet's bright idea that had begun the rescue. Janet had climbed to the top of the beacon and flashed a heliograph signal, the polished cover of her watch reflecting the sun.

"Olga," cried Janet, as the boat put back to the beach, "that was no a mistake ye made about that train, I'm thinking! Ye kenned full weel that the connection from Mayport did nae longer run. Weel, I hope ye are satisfied!"

Olga blushed.

"You are right, Janet. It was a beastly trick. I can see it now."

"Can ye no see anything else?"

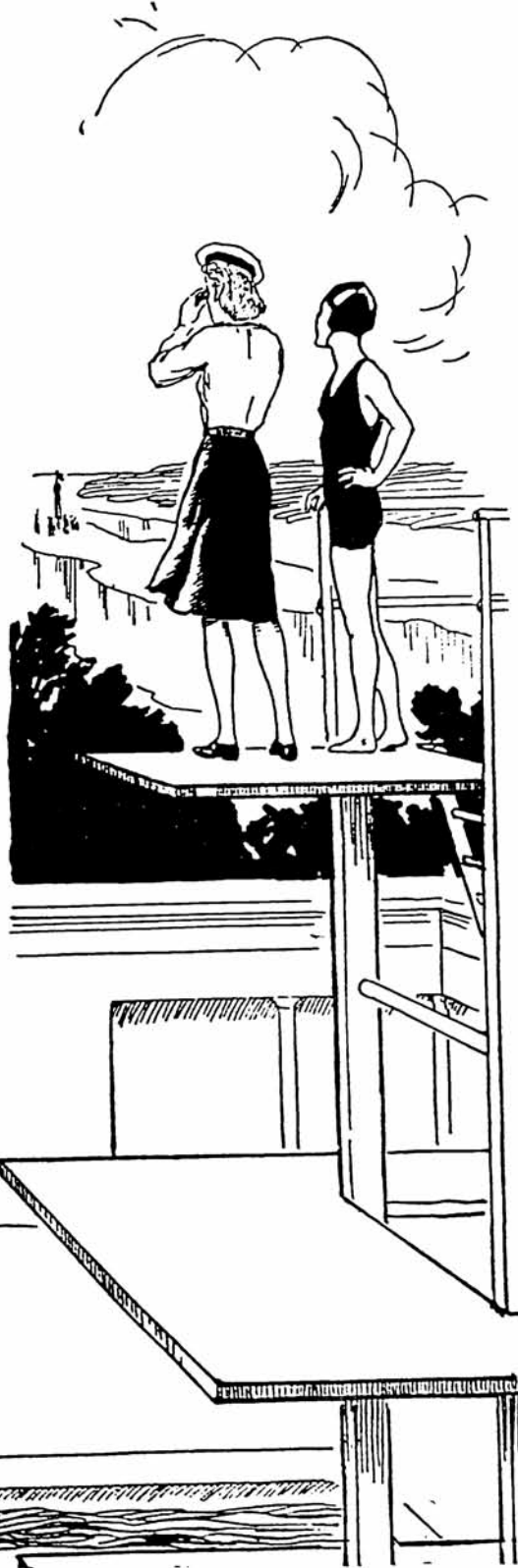
"What—why, where's Betty?"

"Aye!" said Janet, bitterly. "Where is Betty?"

Olga was silent. The crimson drained from her cheeks, leaving them deathly pale. Janet went on to explain to Miss Barry what had occurred. The C.O. made no comment during the difficult passage back to the beach and the landing amid the rising surf.

A number of cadets of the local unit had remained on the beach with the Haven Bay girls to receive them. Mrs. Hargreaves had decided to go on with the contest, one of the Southam girls reported, and the others had accordingly gone back to the Lido. Miss Barry was not now interested, however. She wanted to get her rescued girls indoors, where they could dry their clothes and recover from their ordeal. She also wanted to contact the local coastguard officer to begin a search of the shore and estuary, which she felt almost certain would have a sad result, even if it were successful.

Of all her girls, Miss Barry had valued the petty officer the most, loving her



Through the glasses she saw a group clustered round the beacon

for her cheerful disposition and good influence over the others. Betty Wilson would be greatly missed in the Unit. A sad group, shocked into silence by the tragedy, the girls followed Miss Barry into the Lido buildings. The loud-speaker system which broadcast announcements and music around the swimming-pool was crackling.

"Haven Bay Entrant for Diving Contest, please."

"That is you, Olga," murmured one of the girls, dully.

"No—no!" cried Olga, tearfully "I couldn't—not now!"

A trim figure was mounting the steps of the diving platform as the party entered. Everyone halted in astonishment, too surprised for the moment to speak.

The figure advanced to the edge of the board, and then leapt out and down in one of the most perfect and graceful dives which had ever been performed at the Southam Lido. The figure broke surface and swam towards the edge of the pool amid a storm of applause. The loudspeaker crackled again.

"There is not much doubt about that," came the voice of the local commandant, Mrs. Hargreaves. "The diving contest is won by the final competitor, Petty Officer Betty Wilson, of the Haven Bay Unit. And that gives Haven Bay the leading place in the inter-unit competition!"

The Haven Bay girls surrounded Betty eagerly as she scrambled from

the pool. Olga Brooks pushed forward and confronted her.

"Oh, Betty!" she sobbed. "Can you ever forgive me? I'll never—never try to play a mean trick again. We were sure that you were drowned."

"Cheer up, old girl!" laughed Betty. "You've had your punishment. Anyway, you could not imagine this would happen. It was really our own fault—my fault, in fact—for trying to cross the estuary. I should have known that it was too risky."

"But how did you get here?" demanded Janet.

"I was swept away," explained Betty, "but I managed somehow to keep afloat. I realized that it was hopeless to try and fight the current, so I let it carry me along until it moderated. Then I got ashore. I had been carried about two miles up the estuary. I rushed along here, intending to have help sent to you, but I found that they had already seen your signals and that Miss Barry and Olga had gone out in the boat. Everyone else," she went on, severely, "seemed to have lost interest in the competition, so I thought the best thing to do would be to get into a swim-suit and—er—well, just win the diving competition to keep things going! And now I think Maintop should take over for the rest of the events, and see whether we can not only keep our lead but improve upon it!"

And amid great enthusiasm the rescued division proceeded to do just that.



FLOOD IN THE FENS by Winifred Norling

Marigold Granville stood gazing out over the flat landscape to the river, her forehead puckered in a frown. Everywhere there was water—water, spreading and deepening with every hour. It was plain that the banks could no longer hold back the swollen river; that soon the little Fenland house where the Granvilles lived would be cut off—flooded.

"If only we could have left when the men came and offered to evacuate us!" Marigold muttered, glancing round as her young sister, Freda, came in. "Now we shall just have to stay here till the floods go down."

"I don't mind," laughed Freda. "Neither does Daddy."

"No; Daddy's always wanted to paint a picture of floods, and now he really can. He just won't hear of being moved till he's finished it."

"Oh, but Goldie, if he got his picture accepted!" cried Freda, her eyes shining.

"Yes, it would be wonderful—and it would make a difference to our pockets, too!"

"Anyway," said Freda, "we've plenty of stores, and a canoe to get away in if we have to."

The girl was enjoying being marooned by the floods, but her older sister saw a darker side to the novelty.

"Everything must go upstairs," she declared, piling silver and plate on to a tray. "We must salvage all we can."

Between them, they carried chairs and tables, pictures and books, upstairs out of the water's reach.

"Fill the coal-hod, will you, Freda?" Goldie asked.

Freda nodded, but when she opened the back door she recoiled in dismay. The whole of the garden was flooded, and the water was already lapping against the back step.

"Goldie!" she cried, splashing her way to the coal-cellar. "It's rising *very* fast."

"I wish we were on the phone," said Goldie; "then we'd not feel quite so cut off. But whatever happens, Dads must have the chance to finish his dream picture. If he could get something hung on the line, he would be sure to get commissions."

Marigold was thinking of her empty housekeeping purse, and she sighed. Then she smiled. There *was* something very thrilling about the situation!

"I can't believe these lowering, swirling waters are the same river I loved and enjoyed so much last summer," she said, as the two girls gazed out over the flooded lands.

"Golly, there's the Penfolds' chicken-house floating downstream!" cried Freda.

Marigold glanced at the riverside houses. Nowhere was there any sign of life. Everyone had gone, except themselves.

"Let's go and see how Daddy's getting on," said Freda.

Softly they crept up the narrow flight of stairs to their father's studio. Garth Granville had placed his easel just under the skylight to catch the last of the afternoon light, and was standing before it, lost in contemplation.

"Oh, it's lovely!" cried Freda, gazing at the picture.

"Daddy, it's—it's *it*," cried Marigold.

"So you think it's good?" asked the girls' father.

"Good! It's marvellous! The world will have to acknowledge you now."

"Think so? Well, I hope you're right. I think it's really finished at last. If you're right, Goldie, perhaps it may mean the end of our money troubles. I shan't make a fortune in a day, of course, but if the critics and—

more important still—the buyers begin to sit up and take notice of Garth Granville, I may get some decent commissions."

"How are you going to get the picture to London, Daddy?" asked Freda. "Everybody has left except us, and there are floods everywhere—just as the picture shows."

The canvas showed a sullen grey sky, the swirling waters that were now around them, the deserted, desolate houses, and the stark, leafless trees half buried in the floods.

"Is it as bad as that? You ought to have told me sooner. I've been so absorbed in the work I'd really overlooked that there might be danger. But I can't go till I've varnished that canvas and prepared it for the Academy. There's not too much time, as it has to be in before the end of March. I shall have to wire to Drummond Boyd the size of the canvas, so that he can make the frame."

"I know." Marigold sounded worried. "And it won't be easy to get the picture to London with water everywhere."

"I know!" cried Freda suddenly. "The Websters! I'll go and ask them to help!"

Her father objected, but Freda scorned the notion that she couldn't canoe over the flood-waters to the Websters' boathouse. In the end they let her go.

Directly she began to manœuvre her canoe down the drive, however, Freda realized what a hard task she had undertaken—and what a dangerous one! There were submerged shrubs and other things that might easily upset the canoe. Yet the novelty of the journey thrilled the spirit of the adventurous

girl. To think that she was canoeing over fields and lanes!

Twice she nearly capsized, but she just managed to right herself and keep on. As she neared the river bed, Freda noticed that the current was much stronger, and she had her work cut out to keep going.

It seemed hours before she saw Jack Webster's big boathouse looming up ahead of her. A sigh of relief escaped her; then she felt sudden fear. What if it were flooded and the Websters gone?

As she neared the fence, she saw that the Websters' house stood higher than the floods, though part of the boathouse was under water. She paddled as near to the house as she could, and then leaned over and tested the depth of the water.

"Less than a foot," she murmured, with relief. "I'll tie up the canoe, and wade."

The Websters were very surprised to see her.

"Gracious, missie, where on earth have you sprung from?" asked the kindly old boatbuilder.

"From Willowdene," Freda told him. "You see, Father had to finish a picture, and so we couldn't leave when all the others went. Now we must get away, because the picture is finished, and if it isn't in London by Monday it will be too late to be judged for this year's Academy. We can't risk that!"

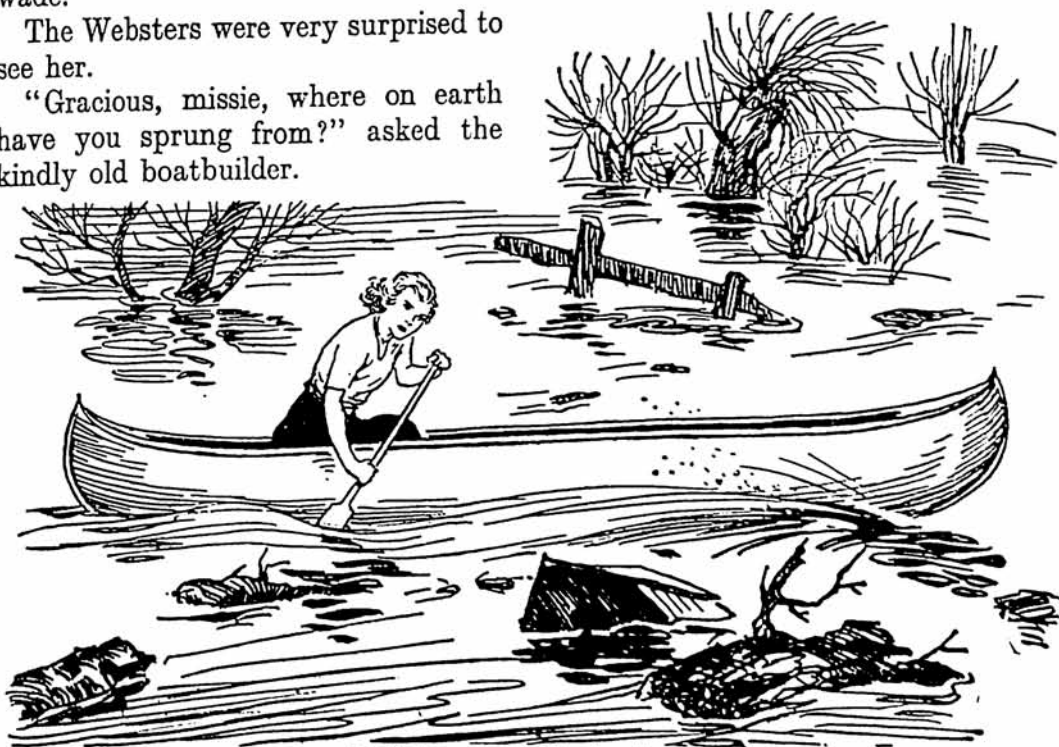
"Is it a special picture?"

"It's a marvellous one of the floods, and I *know* it will make Daddy's name if it's only seen and hung."

"Well, come in, missie, and we'll see what can be done over a cup o' tea."

Finally it was decided that Jack Webster and his son Dick should go over to Willowdene the next morning and fetch the Granvilles and the precious picture.

"'Twould be too late now to make the return journey, missie. You'll only just about get back comfortably before dark."



Freda began to realize her danger

"Oughtn't you to go with her, Jack?" asked Mrs. Webster anxiously.

"Oh, no, I'll manage beautifully," declared Freda swiftly; "especially if you'll be kind enough to send off this telegram for us. It's urgent."

"Of course we will. Will you phone it, Mother, while I get into my waders and start Miss Freda off? The light's going fast."

"I'm ready," cried Freda, springing to her feet and holding out a slip of paper. "Here's the message, Mrs. Webster, and many thanks. By the way, Mr. Webster, could you bring a tarpaulin or something tomorrow, to wrap round the picture in case it rains?"

"Sure I will, missie, and we'll get over to you as early as we can. Somewhere about ten. Here; I'll hold the canoe while you clamber in. All right?"

"Quite, thanks. Goodbye till tomorrow, and thank you for everything. You'll need a solid boat, because the crated picture's pretty hefty."

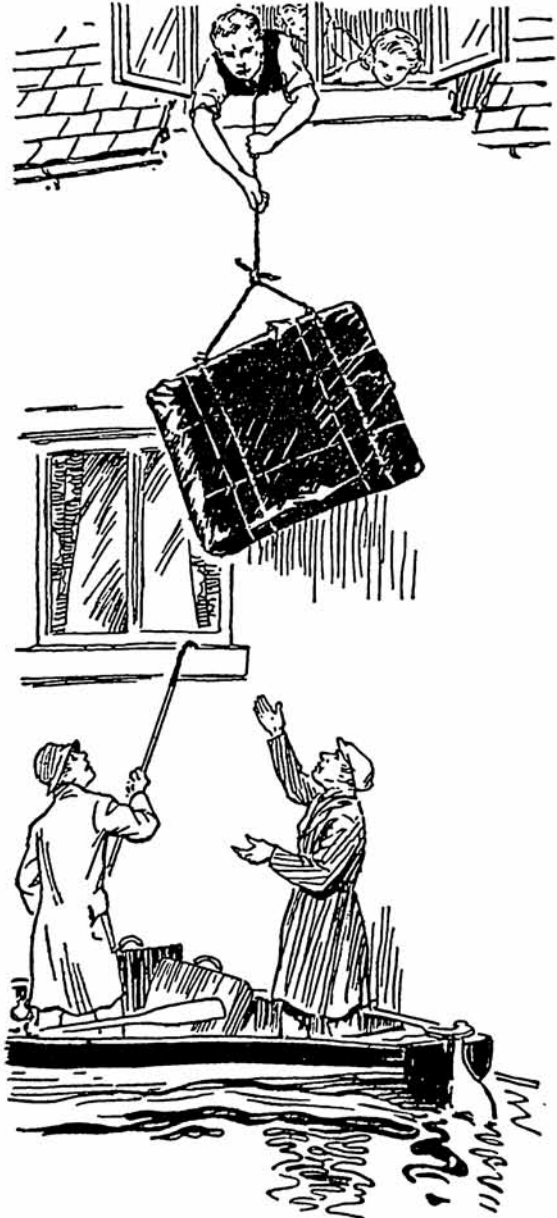
A moment later Freda was skimming away. The current was with her this time, but danger came from an unexpected source.

A young tree, its rootholds gone—swept away by the swirling water—suddenly fell—just ahead of Freda. It was a moment of deperate peril. Riding with the current, the canoe was skimming swiftly over the water. As the tree swayed, Freda saw it out of the corner of her eye, and, as it crashed over, the quick-witted girl, with a swift movement of her paddle, swung the canoe aside. A fountain of water swept over her as the trunk splashed into the flood, and Freda was drenched; but disaster had been averted—by a few inches—and the girl was thankful for her escape.

"I'm lucky to get away with only a soaking," she muttered shakily.

There were a few more moments of hazard from floating objects that threatened to stave in or overturn her frail craft, but Freda, alert and skilful despite her recent frightening experience, was quick to avoid collision.

All the same, she was thankful when



He lowered the picture into the boat

she saw her father watching for her from his studio window and wave a greeting.

Presently, she swung in under the dining-room window, and tied the canoe up firmly. Mr. Granville helped her out.

"Freda, you *are* wet. No, don't tell me anything till you've changed. Goldie has plugged in the electric kettle, and is making some tea. The gas is still working, so you'd better have a hot bath."

"All right, Daddy, but I must tell you that the Websters are coming for us at ten in the morning. Mrs. Webster phoned your telegram, and I remembered to ask for a tarpaulin or something to cover your picture in case it pours."

"Splendid. We'll beat the weather yet, thanks to you, my dear."

Freda skated lightly over the events of her journey by canoe, but she knew that Goldie guessed that there had been peril all the way.

When ten o'clock struck the next morning, there was no sign of Jack Webster, and Garth Granville began to pace up and down in a state of nervous anxiety. Goldie and Freda were almost as anxious; they stayed glued to the window, watching. Near them was the carefully crated picture.

At eleven o'clock Freda's quick eye spotted a tiny speck far away to the west.

"They're coming!" she cried. "I'll wave to them."

"Sorry we're late," apologised Jack Webster as he drew up to the side of the house. "Things are bad, and they're getting worse. We've never known floods like these, and we've seen some bad 'uns. Do you want this tarpaulin up there?"

"Yes, please," said Goldie. "I'll let down a rope and haul it up."

The weatherproof covering was carefully wrapped round the big crate containing the picture, and corded into position.

"Shall I let down our suitcases first," asked Mr. Granville, when everything was ready, "and then the picture? Can you two manage to take it and keep it steady till I get to you?"

"Sure we can. It's quite calm here, and almost as firm as dry land."

All the same, it was more than twenty minutes before Jack and Dick Webster and the little family were pulling away from Willowdene on the first stage of what was to prove as strange and exciting a journey to London as any that took place in the uncertain days of the stage-coach.

The first setback came when they reached the railway station, to which Mr. Granville drove in the Websters' car, the Websters having had another flood-rescue call from a farmer who was faced with a heavy loss of cattle.

"Sorry, miss; I can't book you through to London," the booking-clerk told Goldie when she asked for tickets. "You'll have to go on to East Harbury and get a train from there. The floods have caused a landslide five miles along the line from here, and all trains have had to be cancelled."

"Oh, dear, whatever shall we do?" gasped Goldie, in dismay.

"Have you got a car, miss?"

"Yes. But——"

"Then run on to East Harbury. It's only fifteen miles, and you should pick up the four o'clock for Langley there. Once in Langley, you should get a main-line train to London."

"At this rate we shan't reach

London tonight," said Mr. Granville, worried.

Back in the car, the Granvilles threaded their way out of Farnford and along the road to East Harbury.

"I wish we were going all the way by road," said Freda. "Hallo, there's an A.A. man signalling us."

"What's wrong now?" said Mr. Granville anxiously, jamming on the brakes.

"Sorry, sir, but you can't get through to East Harbury this way," the A.A. man told them, as he came up to the offside window. "Road's under water half a mile farther on, and you couldn't get through."

"But we *must* catch the four o'clock train to Langley," cried Mr. Granville.

"Your best chance is to run straight through to Langley in your car. It isn't more than thirty miles. You should do it easily if you're not held up by floods. I haven't heard that the Langley road's closed, but of course it might be. The position is changing all the time; drive slowly round bends where you can't see what's ahead."

Thanking the A.A. man, Mr. Granville turned the car.

"Turn right when you get to the signpost, Daddy," said Freda.

They found the Langley road quite easily, and set off along it.

"Can't go too quickly on roads like this," Mr. Granville pointed out. "We mustn't risk damaging the picture."

"Kill us, but save the picture," chuckled Marigold. "But of course you're right, Dads. The cargo's too precious to risk an accident."

But in his eagerness to get his picture safely aboard the London train, Mr. Granville began to make the car move faster.

"Even if there's water over the road, there are no dogs, children, or other hazards," he said cheerfully. "So I'm going to step on the gas."

As Mr. Granville said, the road was clear enough for fast driving; but he had overlooked dangers born of the flood—dangers worse because unexpected.

Tooting his horn, he swung round a bend—and then Freda, quick of eye and wit, gave a sharp cry of alarm.

"Stop, Daddy, stop! Look, the bridge is down!"

Mr. Granville gave one look, and jammed his foot on the brake. The car slithered across the road in a broadside skid. Goldie screamed. Freda gripped her seat, and shut her eyes. Then came a jolt, and the car stopped.

When Freda opened her eyes, she found herself looking over the side of the car into a swirling channel of floodwater, above which showed ragged portions of the bridge that the fury of the current had undermined and brought down.

"We're about two and a half inches from the edge," said Goldie, in a shaky voice. "I daren't move."

"I blame myself," said Mr. Granville. "Thank goodness you shouted when you did, Freda! Now shut your eyes; I'm going to back the car."

There was a minute of awful suspense while Mr. Granville manoeuvred the car backwards, inch by inch, from the hungry, fast-flowing channel, the bank of which the two girls feared might collapse under the weight of the car at any instant. At last, however, the danger was past, and all three breathed deeply with relief.

"What now," asked Goldie.

"There's a man," said Mr. Granville, as an elderly labourer came into sight along the road. "We'll ask him."

"Could you tell us where we could cross the river?" Goldie called out when they drew near to the man. "We're in a great hurry to reach Langley."

"I can't tell 'e which bridges be still standing, but you might try the Eversley one," replied the man. "Go back to the thatched cottage and turn right. But don't drive too fast, because there's a lot of water about down that way."

Once more the car went on.

The Eversley bridge was still standing when they reached it, and the girls uttered a sigh of relief when they ran off it on the farther side. But although Mr. Granville drove as fast as he dared, when they reached Langley station the ticket-collector told them that the last train for London had gone.

"But it's only just five, if that," objected Goldie.

"Oh, that was the midday train, miss. All the later ones have been diverted because of the floods."

"Then how are we to get to London? We must be there to-night."

"If you've a car I'd advise your driving south till you come to a big town on the main line. You might be lucky and pick up a London-bound train. In any case, you'll be getting nearer to London all the time; but avoid the Roxley road. That's under water."

"Thanks" said Mr. Granville, rather dejectedly. "Come on, girls."

For a whole hour they travelled south without hindrance. Then, just as they were half-way up a fairly steep hill, the engine spluttered and went

dead. Mr. Granville just managed to swing into the side of the road.

"Petrol!" he cried, in dismay. "I didn't think of having the tank filled! Now we're stranded."

"I'll get out and try and get some," said Freda.

"But it's raining again. You'll get wet."

"That doesn't matter—so long as the precious picture doesn't."

"Take a torch," said her father, "as it is getting past dusk."

"Listen!" cried Freda. "I can hear something. Look! There are the lights! I believe it's a lorry—on the other road! Yes, it is, and I'm going to stop it or perish!"

Slipping from the car, Freda raced away into the dusk. If she did not get to the lorry on the other road before it crested the hill, they might have to wait hours before meeting another, as the floods had depleted traffic.

Panting, the plucky girl ran as she had never run before. The lorry was nearly at the top of the hill. In another minute it would slide over the crest and be gone. Desperately, Freda spurted.

"Stop! Stop!" she shouted, and, bursting out of the side-road and into the middle of the highway, she waved her torch frantically.

She was just in time. The lorry was just gathering speed downhill when the girl heard the brakes go on.

"What's wrong," called the driver, leaning out— "more floods?"

"No; we've run out of petrol, and we must get to London. It's terribly urgent."

"'Fraid I 'aven't a drop except what's in me tank, miss. I fill up a few miles farther on. Would you like a tow to the garage?"

"Oh, yes, please," cried Freda. "You *are* kind. Have you a tow rope?"

"Sure. I always carry one in case of accidents, especially when there are floods about. Where's the car?"

Freda guided the lorry-driver to the car, and the tow-rope was soon attached.

"Good for you, Freda," said Mr. Granville gratefully. "If my picture gets exhibited it will be due more to you than to me or even to Goldie."

But a further shock was in store.

When they reached the garage, they were told that the breakdown was not caused so much by lack of petrol as by an engine defect.

"It strikes me the engine wants a proper overhaul," said the garage man after a short examination; "but I couldn't do that till Monday."

It was defeat, and they all knew it. Mr. Granville looked stricken, and Goldie as if she was going to cry.

Then suddenly Freda cried out: "I know! I've got an idea!" She swung round to the lorry-driver. "Take us to London in your lorry—and the picture as well!"

Everybody stared at the young girl. Then Mr. Granville gave a long, low whistle. "If only you would——"

"It's against rules and regulations," said the lorry-driver, scratching his head; "but no one's going to say much at a time like this. I hear the floods are spreading, and a small car hasn't as much chance of getting through as I have."

"How far are you going?" asked Mr. Granville.

"Right through to London, but I've

got to go round by Bradby, and that means a bit more delay for you. Still, I ought to reach the City tomorrow. Yes, I'll do what I can for you."

It was the end of their troubles.

"It strikes me I shall have to buy the Websters' car from them after this," said Mr. Granville.

"If your picture is a success—otherwise you won't be able to," said Goldie.

"If I pay for the overhaul, that will suit them, I expect," said Mr. Granville; "and I must manage to do that."

It was stuffy in the lorry as it bumped its way through the blackness, rather alarmingly at times, but the Granvilles were so grateful to have the lift that they did not mind being uncomfortable. The precious picture was safely stowed against one side of the lorry, and Mr. Granville sat beside it, carefully keeping it from being jarred out of position.

Freda slept, and then Goldie.

Church bells were ringing when in the early hours of the morning the lorry rattled into London.

Mr. Granville gave a pound note to the lorry-driver.

"I only hope it will turn out to be worth it, sir," said the driver, who had gathered that the painting was intended for the Royal Academy.

It did turn out to be worth it.

In less than two months the hitherto unknown name of Garth Granville was on everyone's lips, for "Flood in the Fens" was the picture of the year.

"I see what Shakespeare meant now," said Freda, when commissions for paintings by her father began to roll in, "when he said that there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the *flood*, leads on to fortune!"



THE LION LEFT BEGGING FOR ANOTHER SWEET



THE LION THAT LIKED PEPPERMINTS

by

Evadne Price

Mrs. Turpin's monthly "At Home" to the socialites of Little Dupperry was in full swing when Jane entered the drawing-room with a rush.

"Mother," she gasped, "there's a big lion hiding under our rhoderden-dring bush."

"Rhododendron, darling," corrected Mrs. Turpin, eyeing her small daughter with some displeasure. "What have you been doing to your hands? And you've torn your frock, too."

"The lion's called Jinny, Mother," went on Jane, ignoring the comments.

Mrs. Turpin, obviously very displeased, raised would-be amused eyebrows at her guests. "Such an imagination Jane has!" she observed.

"Imagination!" remarked Mrs. Tweeddale, the Vicar's wife. "When I was a child I should have been severely punished for telling downright lies."

"Oh, but it isn't lies," denied Jane. "The lion followed me home and ate all my peppermints 'cept one I had in my pocket an' forgot."

Mrs. Tweeddale turned to her nearest neighbour, Miss Emily Baldock. "I am extremely glad my child is devoid of *that* sort of imagination," she said, and Mrs. Turpin flushed.

"All we Turpins are imaginative, I fear," she said coldly. "I personally was noted as a child for the stories I invented about lions and tigers and elephants and things like that. Fairies, too; I used to make up the most exquisite adventures about fairies. And gnomes," added Mrs. Turpin. "But of course some families have imagination and some have not."

"The best cure for that sort of imagination is a good sound smacking," remarked Mrs. Tweeddale dryly, and

everyone present giggled, which made Mrs. Turpin angrier than ever.

"And when did you first meet your booful lion, Janie-Panie?" inquired Miss Emily Baldock archly, digging Mrs. Tweeddale in the ribs behind a pile of rock-cakes, an action Mrs. Turpin observed very clearly. Everyone waited, hardly suppressing their mirth.

"At the circus," admitted Jane unguardedly. "I went down to the edge of the circus when the Professor said 'What little girl would like to shake hands with Jinny the Lion,' an' I shook hands with Jinny, an'——"

"The circus!"

Her mother's tone pulled Jane up with a jerk. Too late she realised what she had done. Mrs. Turpin was the peculiar shade of magenta she always went when she was really upset, and her glance was reminiscent of winter sports and stalactites and ice-cream soda. Jane quailed visibly. Too late she recollected that she had been expressly forbidden to go near the circus under any circumstances whatsoever.

"Oh, I thought Mummy had told little Janie-Panie not to go to the naughty circus," cooed Miss Baldock, and Jane shot her a glance of hate. Miss Baldock *would* say a thing like that to get her into trouble. Purposely.

"I got in for nothing, Mother," stammered Jane.

"Oh!" Mrs. Turpin turned away. "Just go upstairs to bed at once, Jane, and tell Nana I ordered you to."

"And mind your lion doesn't eat you on the way up," called Miss Baldock.

Jane closed the door. "Soppy ole thing. Well, when the lion jumps out on them all when they're going home they can't say I didn't warn them,

that's all. I jus' hope that old Baldock gets cat up, an' her umbrella too."

"Such a fanciful child, my little Jane," was the last thing Jane heard as she started upstairs. "She really believes there is a lion in the bushes, you know!"

Believe it? Of course she believed it. Jane *knew* Jinny was crouching in the rhododendrons. Hadn't she seen Jinny crawl in there after the last six peppermints, and hadn't Popeye come out and barked and then run for his life afterwards when he saw the lion? You couldn't blame him. Jinny was about fifty times his size. Jane stared down from the nursery landing.

Had she seen the bushes move when there was no wind? A yellow paw flashed into view, and Jane exhaled her breath excitedly. Jinny the lion was still there.

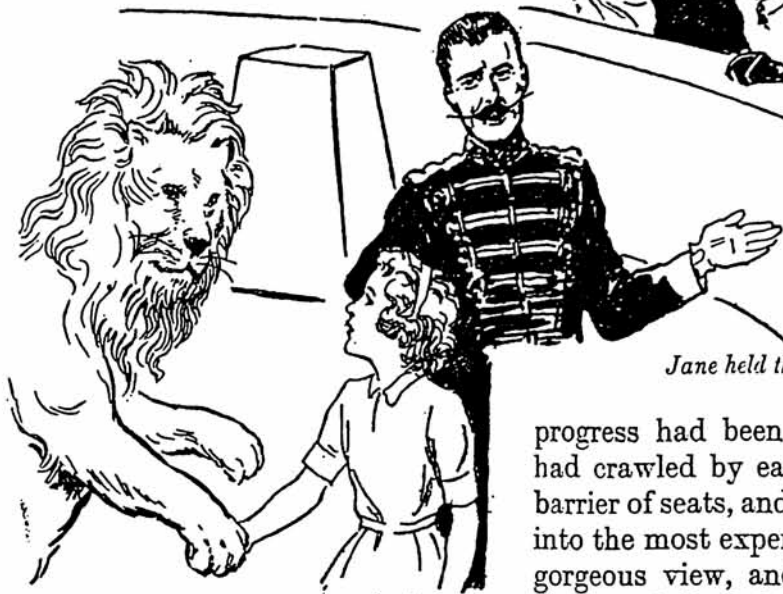
"Well, I warned them, and when they're all eat up they needn't blame me," Jane told herself with much satisfaction.

Having delivered her mother's ultimatum to Nana and been ordered to undress and look sharp about it, Jane obeyed with reservations. She hardly took her eyes off the rhododendron bush in between the various stages of disrobing, in case she missed the spectacle of Miss Baldock being made a meal of by Jinny, silver-handled umbrella and all, with the inscription that read: "From the Mothers' Union of Little Duppery, 1917."

Jane wondered whether Jinny would always keep the handle in his inside, or have to have an operation. But perhaps lions were like ostriches and could digest anything.

"Well, it serves that ole Baldock glad for laughing at me when I warned her. It serves them *all* glad," commented Jane, darting into bed just in time to say goodnight to Nana, and darting up again immediately Nana's footsteps receded to the floor below.

She could still see the yellow paw belonging to Jinny. Was he sleeping or



Jane held the lion's paw

waiting? Jane decided he was waiting for the "At Home" to break up, so that he could take his choice of a meal. Perhaps he would prefer Lady Metwall, who was plump, whereas Miss Baldock was thin.

"Well, they laughed when I warned them," she said again, "an' I betcher if I went down an' told them again, they'd not believe me again."

The circus had been lovely, quite worth crawling under the canvas for when the man wasn't looking, for of course Jane had no money to pay at the door, and her mother had expressly forbidden the household to lend her any. But Jane had decided to go, and go she did. Onco under the canvas,

progress had been fairly simple. She had crawled by easy stages under the barrier of seats, and finally had emerged into the most expensive tier, and had a gorgeous view, and then the greatest honour of all, shaking hands with Jinny the lion in response to Professor Mantana's invitation, when all the other children in the best seats, chaperoned by their nurses or their parents, had been forbidden to do so. Jinny had stood on his hind legs, and Professor Mantana had given him a chocolate and Jane had held Jinny's hand until the trainer, in an undertone, had ordered her to "Give over, missie!" and only then had Jane gone back to her seat in a glow of happiness. Jinny was a real lion, and she, Jane Turpin, had shaken hands with a real lion. . . .

"Gosh!" breathed Jane now. "That was lovely."

And a little later a most amazing thing had occurred. Jane had dropped

her hanky, and leaning down to pick it up had looked through the cracks in the floorboards, and there, fifteen feet below, she had seen Jinny—Jinny, without a keeper or a cage or even a collar round his big yellow neck, lying asleep under the tier of seats. Jane could hardly believe her eyes. She had looked again—it was true enough.

Only for a few seconds had she felt scared. Jinny looked like a giant yellow dog on guard down below there. It was then she discovered, again accidentally, that Jinny liked peppermints, for in her excitement she dropped her paper bag, and the peppermints scattered through the cracks. Jane managed to save most of them, but when she looked down, there was Jinny eating the fallen ones. And as Jane watched, Jinny stood on his hind legs begging for more—just as he had done in the circus ring. It seemed to Jane that Jinny was smiling. She dropped another peppermint by way of experi-

ment and Jinny snapped it up. Then the band played "God Save the King" and Jane stood smartly to attention, and when she looked down again Jinny had disappeared.

What an afternoon it had been. Jane, full of triumph at getting in for nothing, and full of triumph at the story she had for Pug Washington and Chaw Smith about shaking hands with Jinny in the presence of several reliable witnesses, made her way home via the back way, for she had no intention of telling the Turpin family anything about the circus unless she was caught red-handed and had to. Then suddenly she looked back—and there was Jinny trotting along behind her like a dog.

Naturally Jane had been very startled. Who wouldn't have been? To shake hands with a fierce lion guarded by Professor Mantana over a barrier was one thing, to drop peppermints from a height of fifteen feet another, but to have one walking at



Jinny trotted along behind her, like a dog

heel was a different proposition. Jane went weak at the knees. She couldn't have run to save her life, and as she stood there, wobbling horribly, up came Jinny and muzzled the paper bag containing the peppermints.

Jinny wanted another peppermint.

Jane thought swiftly. Give Jinny the whole bag, and he would finish them up, and he might use Jane as a super sweet course. The only thing was to trick Jinny with one peppermint at a time, and by that means gain safety and the Turpin front door uneaten. Jane had thrown the first peppermint as far away as possible and Jinny had retrieved it and sucked it in the proper way, and come up for another, and got it in the same way, and Jane had managed to make the peppermints last until they got home, meeting only a milkman who had given a horrified howl, dropped his milk-can and fled. Jinny had lapped up the milk to the last drop, giving Jane time to flee up the front path, scattering the last few peppermints inside the rhododendron bush, where Jinny had chased them. By good luck the hall door had been ajar, and Jane had closed it thankfully behind her, though by now she felt Jinny liked her too much personally to eat her, and gone in to warn the "At Home"—to be sent to bed in disgrace for telling lies.

"Well, serve them glad when I warned them," said Jane, as Nana returned with milk and biscuits on a tray.

"Serve who glad?" asked Nana.

"Nana, there's a great big lion under the rhododendron bush and they'll all get ate up when they go, specially that ole Miss Baldock," Jane told her, but all Nana said was, "Don't be such

a naughty girl with your lies," and had gone downstairs again.

Nana didn't believe about Jinny, just like the rest of them. Jane finished her supper near the window, and watched the "At Home" break up, her heart beating fast as they walked past the rhododendron bushes. She heard Miss Baldock warn them all to "be careful of Janie-Panie's peppermint-eating lion" and the gay laughter this sally earned. Jane wished Jinny would poke his head out—but nothing happened. Miss Baldock, she idly noticed, had forgotten the umbrella with the silver handle. . . .

At last they had all gone, and Jane heard her mother call up the stairs, "Nana, is that naughty child in bed?" and Nana's answer, "Yes, Miss Jane was fast asleep by now. . . ."

Then at last the leaves of the bushes moved, and Jinny looked out. And at that moment Arnie the gardener came in the front gate, carrying a small paper bag.

In the kitchen Violet the cook heard the wild, dreadful panting of her husband several seconds before he crashed the kitchen door open, crashed inside the room, crashed the door to, and crashed his body against it.

"Why don't you come in?" inquired Violet sarcastically.

"Vilet," cried Arnie in a hoarse voice, "I been chased up our drive be a big lion wot nearly bit me and off. 'Ow I got to safety I dunno; a miracle it was. A great big terrible savage lion, Vilet; I don't know when I seen a bigger one. Big glarin' yeller eyes it 'ad, and foam'n' drippin' jaws——"

"You been too long comin' 'ome,"

said his wife. "It's a wonder you don't say you've been chased by a flock of wild elephants. Where's them caramels I sent you at four into the village to get?"

"The lion snatched 'em outer me 'ands," said Arnie in a trembling voice; "nearly got me 'and at the same time, too."

"Reely, a lion wot eats caramels! Wonders won't never cease, will they?" Vilet's eyes glittered ominously. "You mean you lost the caramels *enn root*, so you invent a silly story about a lion chasin' you up our drive and snatching of them."

"I swear it's true, Vilet. A terrible enormous savage big lion, a beast wot sprung out on me, a-lashin' of its tail. Snap it went at the bag of caramels, took 'em, paper bag an' all——"

"Without saying 'thank you', I s'pose. How bad-mannered of it," scoffed Vilet. "I s'pose then it stood on its 'ind legs and sung 'God save the King'?"

"You can scoff," said Arnie, "but it's true."

"I want them caramels for caramel sauce for my ice pudden," cried Vilet, "so back outer that door you go to the village; there's just time."

"Wot? Outside there into the danger zone, inter the jaws of that there savage wild lion?" inquired Arnie indignantly. "Where's yer 'eart?"

"Where's my caramels?" asked his angry wife. "You go back or you'll get no supper."

"I'd rather go without me supper than provide supper for that 'ungry lion out there," defied Arnie. "I know when I'm safe. And inter the 'all cupboard I go an' take shelter behind its locked door till someone captures it.



"The lion!" screamed Vilet

And put that in yer stockpot and simmer it, you 'ard-'earted vampire."

And say what she might, Vilet could not alter his mind for him. She was furious. With scathing comments she started on a hot chocolate sauce, though what the master would say to it she could not think, for he hated chocolate sauce.

She need not have worried. Mr. Turpin's thoughts at that moment were far away from food. Never had he felt less hungry. He sat, having gulped a large glass of brandy after a somewhat hurried entrance, his heart thumping like a sledgehammer.

"Whatever is the matter, dear?" inquired his wife, and Mr. Turpin, in a quiet, flat voice, answered that he was afraid he was seeing things.

"Whatever do you mean, dear?" asked Mrs. Turpin, very alarmed.



"Lion?" ejaculated Mr. Turpin

"I'm beginning to have hallucinations—seeing things that are not there. It's awful."

"Oh, dear." Mrs. Turpin sniffed. "What with one thing and another I really feel I've had more than I can bear today. Jane has been very disobedient again, too——"

The entry of Vilet with the soup stopped the imminent disclosures of Jane's conduct.

"I don't want any dinner," sighed her husband. "I have no appetite at all tonight. These hallucinations——" He repressed a shudder. It must be the result of all these international crises—thinking he saw a tremendous lion glaring at him through the leaves of the rhododendron bush. The most dreadful thing a man could imagine. There was the lion, complete in every detail, cynically surveying him, champ-

ing its jaws . . . the next moment it had vanished. It was horrifying. He could have sworn there was a real lion——

"Ahhhhhhhh!"

Crash! Vilet the cook dropped the large earthenware platter of creamed chicken and gave a frightful shriek that lifted the preoccupied master of the house several feet from his chair and gave him the worst fright of his life. In his weak state he wondered he didn't pass out there and then.

"The lion!" screamed Vilet. "The lion . . . Ahhhhhhh!"

"Lion!" ejaculated Mr. Turpin, unable to believe his ears.

"Lion!" echoed his wife.

"Lion?" asked his daughter.

"Starin' into the winder at me it was," sobbed Vilet, "with great big ravelous yellor eyes, starin' at the chicken which I've dropped an' ruined."

"Lion? You couldn't have seen a lion," responded Marjorie Turpin impatiently, for she had been extremely hungry, and the sight of the main course on the floor was highly irritating. "You must be dreaming."

"I wisht I was," wailed Vilet, "but Arnie seen it himself jus' now. A great big ravelous lion——"

"Arnie?" broke in Mr. Turpin, who had been regarding his cook incredulously, almost hopefully, one might say.

"The lion chased my poor Arnie up the garden path," explained Vilet, "an' snatched 'is bag of caramels, says Arnie, for which I called him a liar, may I be forgiven."

Mrs. Turpin, who had been staring in horror at Vilet, remembered. "A lion ate Arnold's caramels? Are you sure?"

"Yes, mum; nearly got his hand, too."

"Lions don't eat sweets; don't be silly," said Marjorie.

"Jane said there was a lion under the rhododendron bush that ate peppermints——"

incredulously, gave a cry. "Circus," he shouted. "Of course, that explains the whole thing. A lion's escaped from the circus and it's prowling about our grounds. I saw it myself."

"You saw it, Father?"

"I thought I was seeing things. I



The lion poked his big head out and watched.

"Have you gone completely mad, Mother?"

"Jane said so, and I sent her to bed for telling awful lies in front of my 'At Home'," whispered Mrs. Turpin. "But I'm beginning to wonder if it could possibly have been true."

"True? Of course it wasn't true, Mother——"

"My 'At Home' walked down the path past that crouching savage beast. Oh, it's terrible to think of. If they had been eaten, I should have been responsible for their murders——"

"Of course it isn't true——"

"Jane had been to the circus without permission——"

Mr. Turpin, who had been listening

was strolling up the front path smelling my roses, and I looked across the path and there was an enormous lion watching me——"

"Darling!" screamed his wife. "It might have eaten you——"

Vilet promptly went into a violent fit of hysterics, of which no one took the slightest notice in the general excitement. Mr. Turpin rushed to the telephone to tell the police-station where the missing lion was, shouting out further instructions to barricade all the doors and windows on the ground floor, not knowing that Arnie, now safe in the mackintosh cupboard in the hall, had attended to that little matter before taking cover, not from altruistic

reasons, of course, but to ensure his own safety.

The only unconcerned member of the household was Popeye the pup, who was finishing up the uneaten soup of the first course, and Vilet's unguarded sauce.

Fortunately for Mr. Turpin, the next arrival, Jinny had not finished the caramels when he made his leisurely entry. Jane was quite petrified with horror when she saw her father stop to smell his red *Etoile de Hollande* on the left, and his pink *Shot Silk* on



Jane was petrified with horror.

Jane, from her vantage-point at the nursery window, had of course witnessed the thrilling pursuit of Arnie up the garden path by Jinny, ending only when Jinny extracted the paper bag from Arnie's hand, almost extracting Arnie's hand as well, as Jane could testify. She had watched Jinny's subsequent retirement to the impromptu lair after Arnie had presumably escaped out of Jane's line of vision. Jane could in fancy almost hear Jinny sucking his plunder in the stillness of a perfect summer evening.

"Well, they wouldn't believe there was a lion," said Jane once more, "and I betcher they won't believe Arnie now."

the right. It was one thing letting Miss Baldock get eaten by a lion and another your father whom you loved very dearly, and whom you hadn't had the chance to warn like you had the sceptical Miss Baldock. Jane tried to scream a warning, but her throat was dry and seemed to have closed up. Jinny poked his big head out and watched Mr. Turpin interestedly as he approached. He seemed to be having difficulty with Arnie's sweets, which Jane decided must be that claggy sort of toffee that sticks to your jaws and lasts a gloriously long time. Jane could not see her father's face, but she knew the minute he sighted Jinny by the way his whole body stiffened. Then

he backed out of sight, and Jane heard the hall door bang shut—and that was that. Jane heaved a sigh of relief. Father was safe. Jinny went out of sight again, probably to nose out a fresh sweet.

Jane went on watching until the dinner gong went, when Jinny came out into the open, looking inquiringly in the direction of the bell. Could he be going in to dinner? Had he finished Arnie's sweets?

Jane decided that dinner was Jinny's intention. The smell of food had sent him round to the dining-room, and if they had the garden door open they would believe there was a lion all right. Jinny was probably very hungry by now, having let the "At Home" ladies past and then Arnie and then Father, to say nothing of Jane herself.

Vilet's horrifying scream brought Jane to the top of the stairs; then there were more screams, then hurried, agitated voices, then Nana rushed down into the hall, and then Mr. Turpin ran to the telephone and asked for the police station, to find the number was engaged. (Fortunately for Jane, she failed to catch Mr. Turpin's answer to the lady at the exchange when he was given this latter information.)

"There's a lion in my garden," gasped Mr. Turpin.

"Number engaged," repeated the exchange unemotionally.

"Now p'raps they'll believe me there's a big lion," Jane told herself, going downstairs boldly, rightly feeling a little disobedience would not be noticed in such a crisis.

A most satisfactory state of chaos was in progress. Mrs. Turpin was given sal volatile by Nana, who was weeping and saying, "Well, I never did," over

and over again, and Vilet was lying on the dining-room floor kicking and screaming and laughing and crying and having the water-jug dashed over her by Marjorie, who was as white as a ghost, and Mr. Turpin was banging on the mackintosh cupboard and ordering Arnie out and Arnie was refusing to come, and Popeye was barking and scratching at the kitchen door. Jane let him in, and immediately he ran into the dining-room and ate up the dropped dish of creamed chicken. Popeye was the only one having a good time besides Jane.

Jane walked past him into the dining-room and looked out. Yes, there was Jinny on the lawn, and past him, coming through the end gate. . . .

Jane gave a horrified exclamation. "Miss Baldock!"

"Miss Baldock?"

Jane's shout brought her mother and Nana and Marjorie into the room.

"Yes, it's poor Emily Baldock walking to her death," moaned Mrs. Turpin. "Oh, save her, save her!"

"Wave to her to go back," cried Marjorie, and Jane went over to the window and waved madly, but all Miss Baldock did was to wave back and call "Hidey-ho!"

"She thinks we're beckoning her on," sobbed Nana. "Oh, dear, dear, it's terrible. Ain't it pitiful?"

It was. The most pitiful, frightful thing Mrs. Turpin hoped she would ever see, as she told all her friends next day, seeing poor innocent Emily Baldock walking to her frightful death, coming back for her forgotten umbrella gaily waving a greeting. Mrs. Turpin couldn't bear it, so she fainted dead away. And then Marjorie fainted. And then Nana fainted. Mr. Turpin would



Jane waved her away, but Miss Baldock only waved back

probably have fainted too, if he hadn't been still trying to get the number of the police station—still engaged.

What happened in the next sequence would be told four days later in the *Duperry Weekly Times and Observer* in a graphic first-person article by Miss Baldock, an article that would very much infuriate the other members of the "At Home," who had risked their lives passing the rhododendron bush on their way out, and whom Miss Baldock would never once mention; an article that would give Mrs. Turpin the furies for three days, for while it would eulogize Jane it would ignore her very existence. Miss Baldock would illustrate the article by a photograph of herself taken with Jane, and there would be a large one of Jinny the lion—but there would not be a mention of the Turpin home where the adventure took place. And the heading "Duperry's Most Notable Lady has Amazing Adventure" would be described by Mrs. Turpin as "quite laughable," though she would be unable to laugh much.

I shall never forget the incredible shock of rounding the rose arbour in a peaceful

English garden and coming face to face with a roaring, panting wild beast. I knew it was about to spring on me, but I held my ground. As I stood, it sprang and felled me with its paw. I thought 'So this is death! Well, let me meet it as befits a brave Englishwoman', and I suppose I swooned for a second, though I can still feel the hot, fetid breath of the man-eater fanning my cheek. Then I heard a childish pipe—

'Rise and run, dear Miss Baldock, while I divert the beast's attention. Pray do not waste a second or my efforts will be in vain. I can but hold the lion off a few short minutes. Escape while you can.'

Had I been in possession of my faculties, I would not have obeyed the command in that sweet, childish voice and gone. But half-conscious as I was, I was magnetized into movement, and I suppose I staggered slowly to safety, where I collapsed. That dear, brave child, Jane Turpin, I learned later, had risked her little life to save mine. She whispered shyly to me afterwards that she could not bear to see me die, for she loved me so. She is quite the sweetest little tot I have ever met, a true daughter of Duperry. Greater love hath no man

than this,' meaning child too, of course. Hats off to brave little Jane Turpin, the blue-eyed, golden-headed darling with a gallant soul and a great heart who risked her life for Emily Baldock.

But Jane, in bed with a second supper of scrambled eggs and milk after Professor Mantana had taken Jinny back to the evening performance at the circus, was not to know the shame that was due to descend on her in four days in the article that even now Miss Baldock was composing, for Miss Baldock fancied herself enormously as a writer.

The day was almost over for Jane. Probably in all her life there would never be another quite as thrilling, for it was on the cards that never again would a lion rove the Turpin gardens begging people's sweets, not even a toothless, rheumy one like old Jinny, who loved sweets so much he would go to any lengths to get them, and always had since he was a petted cub at a private zoo. For years now poor Jinny had been forbidden sweets. "Who's been eating sweets, eh, you naughty boy?" Professor Mantana had inquired, and Jinny had hung his great head in shame and looked as if he would burst into tears. Poor old Jinny! It was awful to grow old and be forbidden everything that made life beautiful, such as peppermints and caramels.

"Eat you?" the Professor had scoffed. "With not a tooth in 'is 'ead?

Poor old Jinny ain't touched meat for years. Now, if you offered 'im a rice pudden——"

"Well, I wasn't *very* scaredy," Jane told herself sleepily, refusing to dwell on the way her legs had wobbled when she went out to save Miss Baldock, and how all at once Jinny had stopped being a kind lion who ate peppermints and become a savage, hungry one who probably ate little girls for supper every night.

Miss Baldock had tripped over a tree stump and lain there yelling "Save me! Save me!" and Jane, gritting her teeth, had gone to save her because Father was still at the telephone being given his third wrong number, and everyone else had fainted.

She had thrown her last sweet at Jinny, who had snapped it and sat up for more. And Miss Baldock had gone on yelling "Save me!" until Jane had cried "Run, you soppy ole thing, and shut up that row," when Miss Baldock had legged it like a hare for the dining-room, shutting Jane out, leaving her at Jinny's mercy on the lawn. And there Jinny kept sitting up for another sweet, and Jane hadn't got one, and just as she had given up hope a voice had said, "Jinny, you bad boy, what have you been a-doin' of?" and it was Professor Mantana. . . .

"Well, I betcher they believe there's a lion now, that ole Baldock too," sighed Jane happily.

When Nana came in a few minutes afterwards to switch off the lights she was sound asleep.



THE ELEPHANTS' RIGHT OF WAY

by

V. F. Wells

To the north, Mt. Kenya lifted her snow-capped head 17,000 feet to the blue skies. Her forest-clad slopes looked down upon seemingly unending plains.

To the west lay the deep, forest-covered Aberdares, the range of mountains that still hold many secrets from the white man.

The planter stood talking to his daughter, home from school.

"I see by the paper that the de Witts have returned from South Africa. It would be friendly for us to call on them. Your mother and I have this affair to attend early this evening, but you could ride down the ridge and give them our welcome."

"I'd like to, Daddy. I'll go down the river-valley. It's good fun watching the lumbering old hippos blowing bubbles while they bask in the warm water. They certainly know how to sunbathe."

Judy's father, amused at the never-ending interest his daughter took in this new life they now lived, said, "Well, I've much to do. Think up polite greetings to them and say I'm looking forward to renewing our slight acquaintance."

Judy turned her little Abyssinian mare and went at a slow trot from the coffee shamba down to the deep river-valley leading to the adjoining farm of their neighbour—"next door, five miles away," as Judy put it.

Her thoughts darted as she rode. Less than a year ago she had been at school in England. Then the decision of her father to grow coffee in Kenya caused the great upheaval. It was decided that Judy should come out with them, have a year at the girls' school in the Uplands, then return to a big public school.

How glad she was to have the chance

to know Africa! Everyday she woke to an eager interest in "What might happen today."

How could one ever know or guess? The natives were a continual source of mixed surprise, amusement and annoyance to her. Their simple, childlike ways often made her laugh; their strange customs filled her with curiosity; but often, by their lack of understanding and decent treatment of animals, she was made furiously angry.

Restrained by her father's advice and orders, however, she had learned to curb her passionate outbursts against offenders.

"The ways of Africa are older than the ways of England, Judy. We shan't change them in a few years. Slowly the natives will copy what suits them of our way of life and we must just let them learn that kindness to animals is part of our way."

Judy held the pony with a firm rein as she daintily picked her way down the steep slope, following the winding native track—made by the labour boys as they walked in single file—another of the customs Judy thought queer—to and from their huts in the native reserve.

The glorious brilliance of an amethystine kingfisher as it flashed over the surface of the river caught the girl's delighted eye. No bird in England had that marvel of plumage.

The dangling nests of the weaver birds, making trees look as if dozens of sponge bags were hanging in them, amused her fancy, but it was a small troop of monkeys on their way along the opposite bank of the river that gave Judy her greatest thrill. Checking the mare, she just sat and gazed. No monkey in a zoo *could* be quite the

same. She was sure the fellow bustling from one to the other was the father, plainly annoyed because the party was not making haste as he wished. Mischievously plucking shoots and leaves and throwing them down as they went, the monkeys chattered and jabbered like a lot of children. The mother monkeys lifted their babies like women helping children along.

Tales of big-game adventures told by her friends at school came to her mind. Her father had shot tigers in India, and Judy knew that when the coffee-farm was all planted up there would be shooting for anyone who wanted it. But though her father had taught her to use a gun, she had no wish to kill animals.

She rode on, pleased with the present and happy in the thought of the future.

Arrived at the comfortable Dutch-designed home of the de Witts, the English girl soon found that their neighbour, a very cheerful South African, was full of life and keen as mustard on all that was going on. He heard Judy's message with obvious pleasure and said he had regretted that their long leave falling due so soon after her people had settled in had prevented the two families from becoming fully acquainted, but that they would soon make up for lost time.

"How are you taking to this life, Judy?" he asked.

"I love it! I have to go back to school at home, but I shall come back to Africa to live," she declared.

"Got you already, has it? It gets us all. It wearies us; it makes us angry; often it breaks us; but still it tugs at us." Mr. de Witt laughed at his own words. "Well, I'm sorry not to see

had grown to know a little and love much.

A duiker, the smallest and most appealing of the deer family of that district, ran out from the forest belt, causing Judy to wonder how anyone *could* shoot such a creature.

When a flock of parakeets flew chattering overhead to their homes in the forest tree-tops, she thought: "I'd love to know what they are saying." Then she laughed. "After all, parrots only say words they've learned from people!"

Suddenly she was checked by the approach of several natives, running as if pursued by demons.

Their terrified appearance alarmed the girl. She pulled up the mare.

"*Shauri gani?*" she called.

Slowing and panting as they regained their breath, the frightened natives replied in their own language.

"*Tembo Kujia, Bwana. Tembo mingi sana.*"

Judy understood enough Swahili to grasp their meaning. Many elephants were coming. So Mr. de Witt was right!

"What a thrill," thought Judy. Without waiting to give more than the bare answer, the boys broke into a loping trot, evidently too scared to linger.

"*Tembo wapi?*" shouted Judy to their backs.

"*Karibu,*" they flung out over their shoulders.

"Where are the elephants?" she had asked.

"Near," was the answer.

A close grip with her knees set the mare off again, and Judy, swayed by some impulse, turned her into the forest along a track used by ox-wagons. An urge to be in their forest home with the "lords of the jungle" filled her.

Becoming aware of a heavy rumbling noise, she wondered if a tropical storm had suddenly arisen.

Then a loud snapping and crashing brought back to her the words Mr. de Witt had said; "Anything in its way an elephant moves."

A squeal, which from her visits to the zoo she recognized, told her that the elephants were indeed near.

A queer, clutching dread made her heart go thump, thump, thump.

The newly built native school was in the elephants' way!

Her parents would be in it!

"Anything in its way an elephant moves." Even *one* would not bother to go off its track. A hundred or more certainly would not.

Judy's pulse raced. What could she do?

If the elephants were *eating* their way through the forest she might be in time, but if not—thoughts too terrible to dwell upon crowded into her mind.

On she rode. The noise grew. She was riding towards the herd. Not for a second did she think of turning out of the forest. To go on was nearer and quicker. She *must* get there before the elephants. A great trumpeting from the bull leader made her mare stop dead.

"Go on, go on, old girl!" she urged. "Daddy and Mummy and dozens of boys are in the school. Go on!" and she cut her violently with her switch.

So unused to the whip was the mare that she shot off at a gallop. Low, almost lying over her neck, Judy sat tight.

"Pray she doesn't stumble over a tree root!" she muttered.

How many minutes she rode before

she saw the army of mighty travellers she never knew, but afterwards she said, "It seemed like ever and ever."

The elephants had halted and were feeding, reaching down shoots and leaves from the vast overhead supply store.

One huge fellow had already crossed the track.

Like a horse possessed. Judy's mount raced along the wheel-rutted track and passed the monsters.

As in a nightmare, Judy sat and urged constantly, "Go on, old girl, go on!"

It was over at last, that mad, nightmare ride.

Out of the forest, straight across the shamba, over precious coffee seedlings, she came to the school.

Flinging herself out of the saddle, she drew the mare towards the open door and shouted: "Daddy, Mummy, all of you! Run for your lives! The elephants are coming!"

Amazed at the fear in his daughter's voice, Judy's father stopped in his speech to the gathered boys.

"What's wrong, Judy?"

"Daddy, Mr. de Witt says the elephants cross this very part of the shamba every year trekking, from the Aberdares back to Mt. Kenya. They are coming *now*. I've *seen* them. I rode past the herd. Come—quick, quick—or we'll be too late!"

Knowledge of wild life made her father realize that this was no idle tale. Briefly he explained to the natives. His first sentence caused them to rise as one, and with mutterings of "*Tembo, Shaurie mbya; watu kwenda mara moja*," they rushed pell-mell from the grass *bauda*, racing across the

coffee plantation towards the Bwana's house.

Following them rapidly, Judy told her father and mother of Mr. de Witt's experience and of what the fleeing natives had said.

"I don't think I really took it in," she said; "but now I know." She went on to tell how she rode through the forest. "Listen! You can hear them."

A loud, rallying trumpet-call rang out, as if an order to cease eating and resume the trek had been given.

The crashing and snapping of saplings could plainly be heard.

"We are well away from them now," said Judy's father, as she turned and looked towards the school.

"Oh! Look! Look! See them? How they crowd and jostle each other!"

The herd of giant beasts seemed to plunge over the open ground, making for the ford in the river, just in line with the school. Kept together by herd instinct, they travelled doggedly, as if bound to get to the ford without waste of time. Through the cloud of red dust raised by hundreds of mighty hoofs they passed on their way.

"Daddy, *it's not there now!*"

The new school had vanished, brushed away and scattered like a box of matches by the vast weight and bulk that had passed by, around, and over it.

A look of awe came into the faces of the watchers—awe and thankfulness.

"Judy, if you hadn't come when you did, we and all those boys would have gone as the school has."

Judy looked after the moving herd. "Well," she said, "the elephants were in Africa first, and they have the right of way."



THE ROSE PATROL

by
May Wynne

"I think," sighed Lyn Harford, head of the Rose Patrol, "Captain has given me the list of all the things we are *not* to do. It's downright unlucky, isn't it, girls, but the Rose Patrol really does manage to get in the soup if there's any soup about!"

"It was sporting of Captain to bring us to camp," chuckled Etta Ringle. "She would have had a much more peaceful time with the Lilies and Marigolds."

"If only we could do something heroic and get rid of our bad name," added Mona Flynn; "for instance, if Captain fell into the river and we pulled her out, or a mad bull made for the camp and——"

A chorus of groans checked Mona's imagination.

"Let's go for a hike," said Lyn briskly. "The others won't be back for

ages; we can easily be back by five and make the tea; five of the girls will be in camp. I want exercise."

"And Captain said we might take Pixie," said Nina Mays, hugging a small Cairn. "Isn't he a darling mascot? Come on, girls, and bring a basket for blackberries—they are ripe enough for pies."

The six girls were only too ready to stretch those long legs of theirs, and away they scrambled up out of the hollow where the four tents were pitched.

There was always the chance of finding adventure when exploring, and squeals of delight followed breathless moments of escape from Farmer Emmett's pig, a busy colony of wasps, and a wordy tramp!

"I wish we could go into the General's woods," sighed Etta. "Don't they look

inviting? He *must* be a grumpy old thing! What I should like to do would be to call at the Manor and ask why he is such a perfect dog in the manger."

"Captain's orders—fairly rigid, too," said Lyn. "We shall be on the Common soon, and out of temptation."

She spoke too soon, for a squeal from Nina told of the escape of Pixie, who was not only in those strictly private woods but leaping wildly over the bracken in pursuit of a rabbit.

And Pixie was the darling of Captain's heart; in fact, her birthday gift from an adoring fiancé.

Naturally, the Rose Patrol hurled itself either over or under the barbed-wire fence, and pursued vigorously. Pixie was utterly ungrateful for past favours and took not the least notice of kind friends till Mona, doubling on the little scoundrel, grabbed him at the precise moment that a stern voice hailed the trespassers in righteous wrath.

A grey-haired martinet and a slim, sun-tanned girl of fifteen stood on the path near. The old gentleman—evidently General Alcrant himself—was in a high state of indignation.

"I knew how it would be when Dennison gave leave to you girls to camp in the hollow," he said; "a most unneighbourly act! I warned your Captain—a ridiculous title!—but she is probably one with you in ignoring civilities, making yourselves positive nuisances, and damaging property. If I had my way, young women, I'd give you all in charge."

"Oh, Grandfather," protested the girl, blushing for very shame, whilst Lyn, very straight and very indignant, swallowed back the extremely plain words she wished to say.

"We apologise, sir," she replied,

"but the dog got into the wood and we had to get him back. He—he ought to have been on a lead. We are very sorry."

"No, you are *not*," snapped the General. "You all look as if you could be as impertinent as you please. It is a falsehood to pretend sorrow. I shall speak to Dennison about your camping, and I shall write your fine Captain a piece of my mind."

"Oh!" gasped Etta, and then coughed to cover the explosion, whilst Mona, who always saw the funny side of things, was nearly doubled with the desire for laughter.

Lyn, sensing a more serious sequel, gathered her band and marched off, Pixie tucked under Nina's arm.

As soon as they reached the lane the band played—or, rather, the Rose Patrol talked! The General's ears ought to have burned!

"I'd like to put him in a pillory, or duck him as they used to duck nagging women," stormed Lyn, and the patrol sat up and sang "hear, hear!"

But they showed their wisdom in saying nothing whatever about the adventure on their return to camp. Instead, they bustled about, got tea ready, and behaved in every way as a model patrol should do.

They were squatting round in a ring later, still discussing the General, when a visitor arrived. It was the General's granddaughter.

Lyn saw her first, standing under a blackthorn looking mournfully down at the camp. She signalled to Lyn as soon as she knew herself to be discovered, and the patrol-leader, leaving her chums, climbed up to where she stood.

"I am Hilary Alcrant," said the girl, "the General's granddaughter. I . . . I

came because I was so ashamed and sorry this afternoon. Grandfather was so awfully rude, and, you see, I am a Guide too. I'd been longing to visit your camp."

Lyn was won over at once. "You're a brick," she said, "and of course, you could not help the General being annoyed. It was a pity."

"I want to explain," said Hilary eagerly, as they walked together down the lane. "Grandfather is so very unhappy—and so am I. We, my brother Hal and I, live here. Our parents are dead, and Hal one day would have owned the Manor, but . . . he has left home. It was quite recently, and owing to poachers. Grandfather had an idea Hal was in with the gang. It was through an idiot of a gamekeeper. As a matter of fact, Hal was trying to get a village lad—Billie—whom he was ever so fond of, out of the clutches of the poachers. Hal knew the

gamekeeper was having a grand round-up, and he went to get Billie away. He succeeded, but he himself was there when the gang were taken, and Grandfather refused to believe his word.

"There was a terrible, terrible row . . . and Hal left home, saying he'd rather go abroad and earn a living than have his word doubted. Directly after he had gone Grandfather learned the truth from Billie's father, and . . . and he is . . . oh! I can't tell you how sorry, but his pride won't let him show it. He is always in a bad temper now, and yet I believe he is heartbroken over Hal, and if *only* he would come back things would be happy. But, knowing Hal, I am afraid. I tell you this because I want you to forgive Grandfather, and if . . . oh! if you Guides come across Hal . . . he is tall and fair . . . and like me, only his eyes are blue . . . and . . . and. . ."

A gulp ended the story, and Lyn felt like gulping too.



They hurled themselves over or under the barbed wire

"May I tell the Patrol?" she begged. "We . . . are . . . are rather a black-sheep lot . . . at least, we put our foot or feet into things; but if we *could* help it would be great. Would you tell me where Billie lives?"

Hilary explained. "His other name is Brown," she added: "but he won't say one word. I . . . I think he is rather a dreadful boy."

This was not encouraging, but Lyn was an optimist and returned to the Rose Patrol with her mind made up.

"We must locate Hal," she said, "and send him home. We don't want any kudos, but we would like to make it our good turn."

And with one voice the Roses said: "Hear, hear!"

Of course Lyn was a popular leader. She never monopolized all the best jobs. That was why she sent Etta and Mona to talk to Billie.

"You've got to use tact," she said,

"and—er—cunning. Don't let Billie think you are investigating. You might ask at the cottage for hot water, and then—well, do your job your own way."

Etta and Mona felt it would be quite simple, but they came back crestfallen. There was nothing doing whatever, and they gave it as their opinion that there never would be anything doing in that quarter.

Billie had roared at them and then become dumb.

Lyn only smiled. "Right-ho!" she replied. "We must *track* Billie. If he feels so badly he has probably something to hide."

This was an idea, but it did *not* work very admirably, since Billie never appeared.

In the meantime, Lilies and Marigolds were beginning to ask questions.

What ailed the Roses? Were they drooping?

The Roses responded quite emphati-



They tracked Billie beyond the village

cally, and, for two days, the affair of a missing heir was left in abeyance, as far as discussions went. But Lyn happened to be the sort of girl who, having her nose down to a trail, never leaves it.

The Rose Patrol were playing rounds with the Lilies when Lyn—who had been to the village to buy peppermints—espied Hilary Alcrant hovering near the camping ground. She went up to her at once.

"Billie," said Lyn, "has gone for a walk. I am going to scout after him. He is just creeping along with a basket, and I suspect he may be going to tryst your brother. What shall we do?"

Hilary went white. "Can't we follow?" she asked. "Do come. I am sure Billie knows where Hal is. I must speak to Hal and tell him Grandfather knows the truth."

Lyn grinned. "Which of them is going to eat humble pie?" she asked.

Hilary's eyes grew wet. "That is the trouble," she moaned. "Grandfather never will. He will expect Hal to come back and take no notice, and Hal won't. He will ask for an apology."

"Never mind that now," said Lyn. "Come on, and we'll do our best."

Billie had only just got beyond the village. He was walking quickly, but pausing every now and then. On his arm was a basket. Lyn put her hand on Hilary's sleeve. They would have to follow very carefully, for, if Billie saw them, their chance would be gone.

Billie went on his way. The girls had to be wary lest he should realize they were dogging him. Hilary was not very successful in tracking, and twice Lyn had almost to pull her backwards.

"We must keep him just in view—no more," she urged, when, quite unex-

pectedly, Billie, rounding a corner, vanished from sight.

Hilary really could *not* keep back, and Lyn followed, wishing she had Etta with her.

But where *was* Billie? There was not a sign of him on the path, and yet he could not have run out of sight. Then Lyn's quick eyes caught a glimpse of the basket through the screen of high-growing bracken and bramble behind which Billie had dropped to hide.

He had evidently spotted them—Hilary, most likely—and promptly gone to earth.

His pale eyes stared up spitefully at the girls as they stopped and looked at him. Why did they spy, he asked, when all he was doing was to take a basket of food to an old aunt? Did they think he was doing wrong, or what? Finally, he got up, and without another word shuffled off in another direction altogether.

Hilary was crying in her disappointment.

"I made so sure that he was going to Hal," she moaned. "I still believe Hal is somewhere in the neighbourhood—but only for a time. He will keep his word and go abroad. I shall never see him again."

Lyn could say nothing to console her.

The Rose Patrol was inclined to be reproachful when their leader returned. "We guessed you had gone off after the boy," they said. "You might have told us."

"Good thing I did not," retorted Lyn. "Hilary Alcrant invited me to track Billie, but we messed it up. Still, I have an idea. After tea we will go to the Council Tree."

The girls cheered up at this. After all, it was as well that they had had



of locality, pointed to a wooded hill to the right.

Nina gurgled. "We are going to trespass again," she said; "and if we do fall in with any poachers or game-keepers there will be sparks flying."

"Look here," urged Etta; "Leave Lyn and me to carry on and you four go home to bed."

But, though the knees of four valiant Guides *were* very wobbly, they utterly refused to leave their comrades.

And there above them stood Closter's Tower, a broken old ruin that had once been a monastery close by. But the Tower, though ancient, was intact.

"That's not smoke, is it?" asked Mona doubtfully, as she pointed.

As she spoke a clatter of footsteps was heard, and down the path, racing headlong in his fright, came the village boy—Jack.

He nearly knocked over Mona, but she grabbed his coat-collar.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

The boy twisted like an eel. "It's Abbot Paul!" he groaned. "A' heard him groan. A' heard him groan." He succeeded in escaping as he spoke, and fled on.

White-cheeked, trembling, the girls went towards the blazing tower

Etta looked round. "Where's Lyn?" she asked.

None of them had noticed Lyn's disappearance, but they guessed very well what it meant.

"Come on," called Etta. "Come on!"

They went on.

The trees and bushes grew thick half-way up the slope, and it was not till they reached the summit that the girls had a clear view of Closter's Tower.

And what they saw set their hearts bumping most unpleasantly against their ribs.

The Tower was on fire.

Evidently the blaze had started in some upper part of the Tower, and already flames were curling round the quaint old turret.

But where was Lyn?

White-cheeked, trembling, the girls went nearer. Dried and shrivelled leaves and black smuts were raining down; there was a wild hooting of owls as they were driven out from the ivy.

Above, in the summer sky, sailed a full moon, flooding valleys and woods with white radiance, at variance with the red tongues of fire, the grey billowing of smoke.

"Lyn!" shrieked Mona and Claribel in a frenzy of fear, while Etta and Mona, pulling their hats low and shielding their eyes with their arms, dashed forward towards the narrow, gateless entrance.

The smoke almost drove them back, but they had heard a cry from the stairway. It wasn't likely that they were going back.

Etta caught a glimpse of Lyn just as she came sliding, reeling down, through the smoke, with a boy's senseless figure across her shoulder.

Even in that moment Etta remembered how Lyn always excelled at the fireman's lift.

But Lyn's strength was failing her, and she almost fell into the arms outstretched to help her.

Etta and Mona always declared that they never knew how they *did* get down the rest of those stairs and out on to the hillside where their chums were awaiting them.

Others were arriving, too: Thomas, the burly gamekeeper, and several of his companions. They came forward at a run. At sight of the lad, unconscious and smoke-blackened, being dragged along by two battered and tattered Guides, the gamekeeper gave a cry of amazement and horror.

"If it isn't Mr. Henry!" he cried.

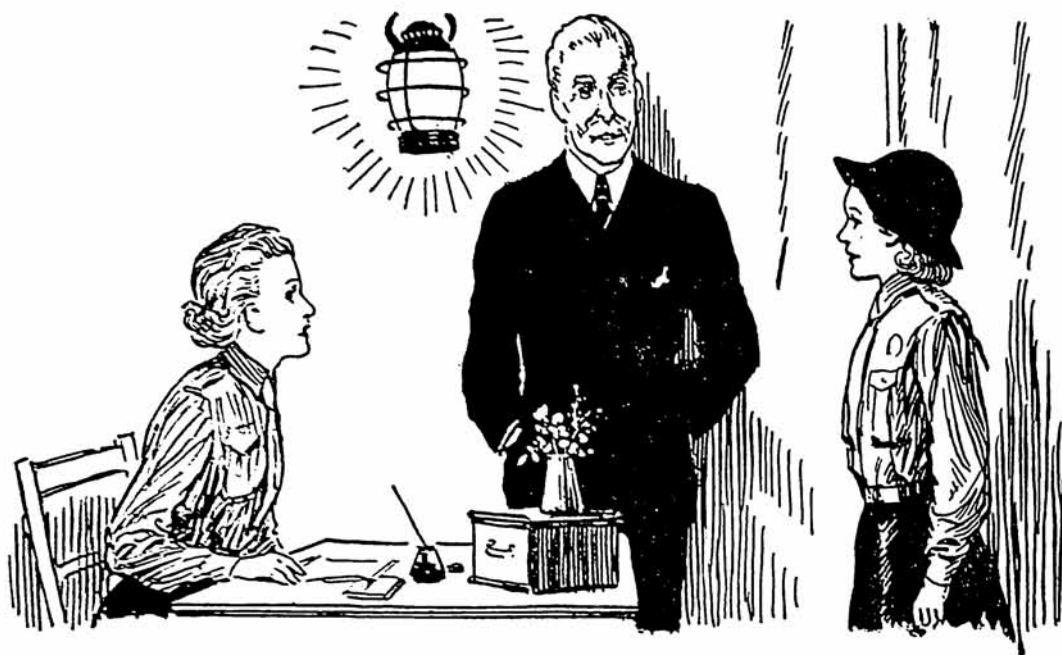
"If it isn't the young master!"

Lyn had managed to stagger out, but collapsed. It was for Thomas and his comrades to take charge of the party. Dispatching one of his men for help, the gamekeeper turned to Etta, who, although scorched and blackened, was unhurt.

Etta forestalled the bewildered man. "You'll take, Mr. . . . er . . . Hal to the Manor, of course?" she urged. She looked distressfully at Lyn, who was already sitting up, propped by Claribel's arms. "We—er—had better go back to camp," she added. "Captain doesn't know we . . . er . . . are out. There'll be . . . er . . . rather a row."

In spite of his distress, Thomas could not help smiling.

"You young ladies all come back to the Manor," he urged, "seeing you know more of this business than we do. I'll guarantee the General will make it all right with your Captain."



The Captain had no idea that the Rose Patrol had been breaking rules

Etta beamed. "That *would* be best," she agreed, "as Captain doesn't know we are missing."

It was, so five guides felt, something of a triumphal procession back through Moonlight Woods; for, though the two chief characters were still barely conscious, it was fairly evident that there was nothing to worry about.

Thomas had sent a messenger on ahead, and, by the time the party arrived, the General was waiting expectantly for them, with a crowd of servants all breathless with anxiety.

At the sight of the blackened party, all the General's pride and stiffness vanished, and he insisted on carrying Hal into the room hastily prepared on the ground-floor.

As soon as Hilary had been comforted by the report that her brother was all right, she swooped upon six heroines—though the Rose Patrol firmly insisted that Lyn was the only one to deserve a heroine's halo.

Lyn, having been washed, and her

charred uniform exchanged for one of Hilary's dressing-gowns, tried vainly to escape from an unwelcome rôle, and then gave her story briefly.

"Hal," she said—"it saves trouble to call him that—must have been lighting an oil-lamp when Jack's 'Cooee' startled him, and over the lamp must have gone. That's what I suppose, but, anyhow, he stayed to put it out instead of escaping, then fell. He must have groaned, which sent Jack scuttling in fear of ghosts. When I got to the Tower, Hal had reached the stair, but was overcome by the fumes. Something caved in behind us, and the smoke was awful. That's about all."

She looked at her patrol, and her patrol looked at her. They were thinking of Captain and the voice of condemnation so sure to be heard from the virtuous Lilies and Marigolds. Of course! *The Roses again!*

Then the General came out. His eyes twinkled as he looked at the smoke-grimed Patrol.

"Your Captain will be tremendously proud of you all," he remarked. "I think on the whole I had better risk arousing the camp and go and tell her. Would one of you like to come with me in the car?"

Etta said she would go.

It was rather thrilling, though at first Etta was nervous, wondering whether Captain would see quite eye to eye with the General, whose praise, however, was sweet.

Etta had an idea Captain would not be *quite* so lavish with praises, since, when one came to think of it, obedience did rank as one of the first Guide laws. She was trying to explain this to the General in reply to grateful words of his, and really it *was* nice to find that he understood. Tonight, indeed, that dog-in-a-manger, grumpy old tyrant had been transformed into a kindly, thankful friend whose eyes were more than once dim with tears.

"You are quite right, child," he said quietly. "Obedience comes before sacrifice; but in this case I believe your Captain will understand—and forgive."

It was nearly midnight before the camp was reached, but fortunately Captain for once was burning the midnight oil and actually was found by Etta quietly writing letters, with no idea that the Rose Patrol was breaking rules—and making history.

The sight of her white, scared face gave Etta the punishment that was rightly enough deserved, though Captain was quickly reassured as to the safety of her girls. The General's gratitude and praise made her forget all the stern things she ought to have said.

Of course she would have liked to come up to the Manor at once, but how could she leave all her peacefully

sleeping Lilies and Marigolds? In the end Etta was sent back with a message of forgiveness, which made the whole Rose Patrol firmly resolved *never* to break rules again. As to the sequel, you can guess it, can't you?

The day before the homegoing of the Guides, the General had invited the whole party to the Manor, and there were Hal and Hilary ready to take charge of the famous Roses. Of course they *were* famous by now—there was no getting away from it. After a gorgeous day of fêting and fun the General gathered Guides and friends on to the lawn, where he made the loveliest speech before presenting the Rose Patrol with emblem brooches in diamonds.

How those girls blushed and babbled thanks and gloated over diamond roses! It was Hal who led the cheer in honour of his rescuers.

"And we shall hope," added the General, standing between Hal and Hilary, "to have you girls—all of you—to camp next year in the Manor grounds."

But to the Roses he was adding a special invitation for Christmas.

As for Lyn—well, the General and Hal simply couldn't express thanks enough for bringing them together again.

For the rest, Captain struck the right note as they jogged homewards in their lorry.

"It's been a great camp," she said, smiling, "and we've learned great lessons. I for one shall know what to expect when I hear the cry so familiar to us all: 'Of course—the Rose Patrol!' Well done, my Roses!"

And the Lilies and Marigolds said: "Amen!"

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